

**UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**



**Malaysian Learners' Conceptions of their Learning  
Processes and their Perceptions of their English as a  
Second Language (ESL) Courses in a Tertiary Distance  
Learning Context**

*by*

***Siew Ming Thang (M.A.)***

**Volume One: Chapters 1 to 7**



**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**October 2001**



# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Colin Harrison and Dr. Barbara Sinclair for their constant guidance, support and encouragement.

I would also like to express my thanks to my friends here in the School of Education and to those back home who have helped me in one way or another. Special thanks go to my friends, Dr. John Wang and Dr. Liu Woon Chia who helped me understand the rudimentary of statistical analysis and, for their invaluable advice and suggestions on how to analyse my data, and to Dr. Kennedy Quaigrain for the useful comments he gave regarding the final draft of my thesis. I am also indebted to my friend Ms. Wong Fook Fei who helped me to translate my questionnaire to Malay and for sending me relevant materials and information. My thanks also to my fellow research students, Ms. Dely Lazarte, Ms. Yong Chye Fong and Mr. Rolf Wiesemes for their help and support during my final stage of editing. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ms. Jane Restorick and Mr. Matthew Nilan for their help in solving technical and statistical problems.

I am also grateful to my Head of Department, Assoc. Professor Harriet Wong and my Dean, Professor Zawiah Yahya for supporting my application for scholarship and to University Kebangsaan Malaysia for granting me this scholarship which made it possible for me to pursue my studies at the University of Nottingham.

Last but not least, I would also like to express my gratitude to my husband and my parents and family back home for their constant support and encouragement. I am especially indebted to my husband for taking care of our two children, Chee Hao and Chee Zhao, while I was concentrating on my studies.

# ABSTRACT

There is an ever-increasing demand for higher education in Malaysia. In order to fulfil this demand, the government has introduced numerous measures to expand higher education opportunities. These plans have included the expansion and development of distance education. Prior to the mid-1992, only one public university, i.e., University Sains Malaysia, offered distance learning courses. Presently, six out of the eight public universities are participating in off-campus/distance education schemes. The distance learning courses offered by these universities can be divided into two categories: content courses and language courses. Research into the effectiveness of the distance learning content courses has been undertaken, but so far, no research has been carried out on the distance learning **language** courses. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the effectiveness of the distance learning English Proficiency Programme of one of these universities, i.e., Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, in meeting the learning needs of the distance learners. This thesis undertakes three studies that investigate the distance learners' conception of their learning styles in learning English, their approaches to studying in general and their perceptions of their English Proficiency Courses. On-campus learners are included to enable a comparison to be made.

The thesis adopts an integrated approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The instruments used are questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires are adapted from those of Willing's (1988) and Entwistle and Ramsden's studies (1983). The semi-structured interviews are used to elicit information regarding distance learners' views of their English Proficiency Courses. The data are analysed statistically (with the use of SPSS 9.0) as well as qualitatively. The purpose of this research is to devise a strategy for developing a distance learning English as a Second Language programme suitable for university learners in Malaysia and, possibly, to provide insights which might be applicable to other similar contexts.

## Definitions of Key Terms

**students' conceptions/  
perceptions:** students' personal views

**learning processes:** in the context of this thesis the term refers to learning styles and approaches to studying in general

**learning styles:** Characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment (Keefe, 1987:5). In general, students retain these preferred learning styles despite the teaching styles and classroom atmospheres they encounter, although the students may, over time, acquire additional styles.

**approaches to studying  
in general:** Approaches that a learner adopts in learning in a specific learning environment. It does not refer to learning of a specific subject. These underlying approaches are relatively stable and do not vary from task to task but they do vary due to exposure to a certain type of learning environment or interplay of the environmental and personological factors for a certain period of time.



# Key Acronyms

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ApplSc	Applied Science
ASI	Approaches to Studying Inventory
Av	Average Proficiency
BusAdm	Business Administration
CPQ	Course Perceptions Questionnaire
DLs	Distance Learners
EPCs	English Proficiency Courses
EPD	English Proficiency Department
EPP	English Proficiency Programme
EPT	English Proficiency Test
ESL	English as a Second Language
FD	Field Dependent
FI	Field Independent
GEPCs	General English Proficiency Courses
Hi	High Proficiency
HLCs	High Level Courses
KBSM	Integrated Secondary School Curricula
KBSR	Integrated Primary School Curricula

L2	a Second Language
Lo	Low Proficiency
LTS	Learner Training Scheme
NASI	New Approach to Studying Inventory
NCPQ	New Course Perceptions Questionnaire
OCLs	On-campus Learners
PLSQS	Perceptual Learning Style Preference Survey
PNGK	Cumulative Grade Points Average
PMR	Lower Secondary Assessment
PPLK	The Center for Off-Campus Students
RASI	Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory
SD	Standard Deviation
SocSc	Social Science
SPM	Malaysian Certificate of Education
SPQ	Students' Processes Questionnaire
SPSS	Statistic Package for Social Science
TESL	Teaching English as Second Language
UKM	University Kebangsaan Malaysia
UM	University of Malaysia
UPLK	The Unit for Off-Campus Students
UPM	Universiti Pertanian Malaysia
USM	The Science University of Malaysia

# Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Setting the scene .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background to the research problem .....	1
1.1.1 <i>Factors leading to the expansion and development of distance education in Malaysia</i> .....	1
1.1.2 <i>The Position of English Language in Malaysia</i> .....	8
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	10
1.3 Context of the problem .....	13
1.4 Scope of the research .....	16
1.5 Research perspective.....	19
1.6 Research questions.....	22
1.7 Outline of the thesis .....	26
 <b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	 <b>31</b>
<b>Education in Malaysia .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	31
2.2 A brief history of Malaysia .....	31
2.3 The Malaysian education system .....	33
2.3.1 <i>Education before the arrival of the British (before 1824)</i> .....	34
2.3.2 <i>Education with the arrival of the British (1786-1956)</i> .....	34
2.3.3 <i>Education after the Second World War (1946-1963)</i> .....	35
2.3.4 <i>Education after the May 13, 1969 racial riots (1969 up to 2000)</i> .....	37
2.4 Malaysian public education system .....	40
2.5 A brief historical review of university education in Malaysia.....	43
2.6 The history of distance education in Malaysia.....	46
2.6.1 <i>USM's distance education system</i> .....	48
2.6.1.1 Delivery model for content.....	51
2.6.1.2 Technology and Support Services.....	52



2.6.2 The UKM distance education system.....	55
2.6.2.1 Teaching/learning Components.....	58
2.6.2.2 Delivery model for content.....	60
2.6.2.3 Future plans.....	61
2.6.3 Comparison of USM and UKM models of distance learning and conclusion.....	62
 <b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Theories of distance learning, second language learning and adult learning .....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	64
3.2 Distance education.....	65
3.2.1 The evolution of distance education.....	65
3.2.2 Definitions of distance education.....	66
3.2.3 Theories of distance education.....	71
3.2.4 Applicability of the theories of distance education to the UKM context .....	80
3.3 Theories of first and second language learning.....	83
3.3.1 The behaviourist approach to learning.....	84
3.3.2 Innative approaches to learning.....	85
3.3.2.1 The Universal Grammar model.....	85
3.3.2.2 Interlanguage.....	86
3.3.2.3 Krashen's 'monitor' model.....	88
3.3.3 Cognitive approaches to learning.....	90
3.3.3.1 The information processing model.....	91
3.3.3.2 Piaget's theory of cognitive development.....	92
3.3.4 Humanistic approaches to learning .....	93
3.3.5 The social interactive approach to learning.....	94
3.3.6 Applicability of language learning theories to the distance learning context.....	96
3.4 Adult learning and the adult learner.....	100
3.4.1 Adult learning theories .....	101
3.4.2 Applicability of adult learning theories to the distance learning context.....	106
3.5 The theoretical construct of the thesis.....	107

**CHAPTER 4 ..... 109**

**Methodological considerations..... 109**

4.1 Introduction..... 109

4.2 Qualitative and quantitative research traditions: choosing a principled pathway..... 110

4.3 Overall research design..... 116

4.4 Justification of methodology used ..... 119

4.5 A review of the pilot studies ..... 124

*4.5.1 Pilot Study One: ESL Learners' Conceptions of their Perceptual Learning Styles*  
..... 124

4.5.1.1 Research Design..... 124

Research instrument ..... 124

Subjects ..... 126

Procedures..... 126

Summary of results..... 128

Suitability of the research instrument..... 129

*4.5.2 Pilot Study Two: ESL Learners' Conceptions of their Approaches to Studying.* 130

4.5.2.1 Research Design..... 130

Research instrument ..... 130

Summary of results..... 133

Suitability of the research instrument..... 135

**CHAPTER 5 ..... 137**

**Study One: Conceptions of learning styles in learning English: Focusing on the  
literature..... 137**

5.1 Introduction..... 137

5.2 Learning style..... 139

*5.2.1 Cognitive styles*..... 142

*5.2.2 Sensory/Perceptual styles*..... 145

*5.2.3 Affective styles* ..... 148

5.3 Willing's study (1988) on learning styles.....	149
5.3.1 Description of Willing's construct.....	149
5.3.2 Description of Willing's questionnaire.....	159
5.3.3 Description of his methods of analysing data .....	161
5.3.4 General results of his study.....	162
5.3.5 Overall Conclusion.....	165
 <b>CHAPTER 6 .....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Study One: Conceptions of learning styles in learning English: Focusing on the data</b> .....	<b>167</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	167
6.2 Research design .....	168
6.2.1 Research questions .....	168
6.2.2 Research instrument .....	169
The "How Do You Learn English?" Questionnaire .....	170
6.2.3 Sample population.....	172
6.2.4 Research procedures .....	175
6.3 Analysis of Results .....	178
6.3.1 Item Analysis .....	178
6.3.1.1 Presentation of results .....	179
6.3.1.2 Discussion of results.....	181
6.3.2 Factor analysis .....	182
6.3.2.1 Reliability.....	188
6.3.2.2 Description of the factors .....	189
6.3.2.3 Scoring .....	196
6.3.2.4 Presentation of results .....	196
Relationship between modes and learning style groups.....	196
Relationship between proficiency levels and learning style groups.....	202
Relationship between Disciplines and Learning style groups.....	207
Summary of the main findings of the study.....	212
6.3.3 Implications of findings to teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context.....	214



**CHAPTER 7 .....215**

**Study Two: Conceptions of approaches to studying in general: Focusing on the literature.....215**

7.1 Introduction.....	215
7.2 Research on student learning in higher education .....	217
7.3 Theoretical rationale for investigating approaches to studying .....	228
7.4 Entwistle and colleagues' Approaches to Study Inventory.....	231
7.4.1 Events leading to its development .....	231
7.4.2 Development of Pilot Inventories .....	233
7.4.3 Main study undertaken by Entwistle and colleagues.....	237
7.4.3.1 Results of the study .....	238
7.4.3.2 Relationships between approaches to studying.....	240
7.4.4 Further Development work on the inventory.....	241
7.5 Empirical studies on approaches to studying.....	246
7.5.1 Introduction.....	246
7.5.2 Review of studies that compare approaches of studying of distance learning students and campus-based students .....	247
7.5.3 Comparison of the approaches to studying of campus-based students with those of distance learning students .....	253
7.5.4 Background variables affecting approaches to studying.....	256
7.5.5 Summary.....	263

**CHAPTER 8 .....266**

**Study Two: Conceptions of approaches to studying in general: Focusing on the data 266**

8.1 Introduction.....	266
8.2 Research Design.....	267
8.2.1 Research questions .....	267
8.2.2 Research instrument .....	268
8.2.2.1 The New Approaches to Studying Inventory.....	268
8.2.3 Sample population .....	274
8.2.4 Research procedures .....	274

8.3 Analysis of Results .....	277
8.3.1 <i>Item analysis</i> .....	277
8.3.1.1 Comparison of mean scores across modes .....	278
8.3.2 <i>Scale Analysis</i> .....	285
8.3.2.1 Analysis of reliability of classification of items based on the NASI scales .....	285
8.3.2.2 Analysis of approaches to studying preferred by learners of different modes .....	286
8.3.2.3 Analysis of approaches to studying preferred by learners of different proficiency levels .....	289
8.3.2.4 Analysis of approaches to studying preferred by learners of different disciplines .....	293
8.3.2.5 Comparison of approaches to studying across modes and across proficiency levels .....	296
8.3.2.6 Comparison of approaches to studying across modes and across disciplines .....	298
8.3.3 <i>Factor Analysis</i> .....	300
8.3.3.1 Presentation of results .....	302
8.3.3.2 Discussion of results .....	303
8.3.4 <i>Overall discussion of results</i> .....	306
8.4 Implications of findings to teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context .....	310

## CHAPTER 9 .....312

### **Study Three: Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses: Focusing on the New Course Perceptions Questionnaire.....312**

9.1 Introduction.....	312
9.2 Entwistle and Ramsden's Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ).....	314
9.2.1 <i>Circumstances leading to the development of the CPQ</i> .....	314
9.2.2 <i>Development of the CPQ: Part 1</i> .....	318
9.2.3 <i>Development of the CPQ: Part 2</i> .....	321
9.3 Entwistle and Ramsden's investigation of the approaches to studying in contrasting departments .....	325
9.3.1 <i>Differences in students' approaches in contrasting subject areas</i> .....	327
9.3.2 <i>Effects of departmental contexts on student learning</i> .....	331
9.3.3 <i>Academic progress in different departmental contexts</i> .....	332



9.4 Research Design.....	335
9.4.1 <i>Scope and the objectives of the study</i> .....	335
9.4.2 <i>Rationale for using the Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ) and the interviews</i> .....	337
9.4.3 <i>Research instrument</i> .....	338
9.4.3.1 New Approaches to Studying Inventory (NASI).....	338
9.4.3.2 New Course Perceptions Questionnaire .....	340
9.4.4 <i>Sample population</i> .....	342
9.4.5 <i>Research Procedures</i> .....	342
9.5 Analysis of the Results.....	343
9.5.1 <i>Item analysis</i> .....	344
9.5.1.1 Comparison of mean scores across modes.....	345
Presentation of results.....	345
Discussion of findings.....	347
9.5.2 <i>Scale Analysis</i> .....	348
9.5.2.1 Analysis of reliability of classification of items based on the NCPQ scales.....	348
9.5.2.2 Analysis of perceptions of courses of learners of different modes.....	349
Presentation of results.....	349
Discussion of results.....	350
9.5.2.3 Analysis of perceptions of courses of learners of different proficiency levels.....	351
Presentation of results of distance learners.....	351
Presentation of results of on-campus learners .....	352
Discussion of results of both distance learners and on-campus learners.....	353
9.5.2.4 Analysis of perceptions of courses of learners of different disciplines.....	354
Presentation of results of distance learners.....	354
Presentation of results of on-campus learners .....	355
Discussion of results of both distance learners and on-campus learners.....	356
9.5.3 <i>Factor Analysis</i> .....	357
9.5.3.1 Introduction.....	357
9.5.3.2 Factor Analysis of the NCPQ scales.....	358
9.5.3.3 Factor Analysis of the NCPQ items .....	360
9.5.3.4 Factor Analysis of the combined ASI scales/subscales and the NCPQ scales.....	369
9.5.4 <i>Summary of results obtained from analyses of the NCPQs</i> .....	373



<b>CHAPTER 10 .....</b>	<b>377</b>
<b>Study Three: Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses: Focusing on the interviews .....</b>	<b>377</b>
10.1 Introduction.....	377
10.2 Research design .....	378
10.2.1 <i>Research Instrument</i> .....	378
10.2.2 <i>Sample population</i> .....	380
10.2.3 <i>Research Procedures</i> .....	382
10.3 Analysis of the interviews.....	382
10.3.1 <i>Analysis of interviews according to themes</i> .....	382
10.3.2 <i>Analysis of other relevant themes arising from the data</i> .....	397
10.4 Overall discussion of results .....	401
10.5 Implications of the findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context.....	406
 <b>CHAPTER 11 .....</b>	 <b>407</b>
<b>Summary, Pedagogical implications, and Strategy for developing an ESL distance learning programme .....</b>	<b>407</b>
11.1 Introduction.....	407
11. 2 Summary of the main findings of the three studies.....	407
11.3 Implications of the findings of the three studies to the teaching and learning of English as a second language.....	414
11.4 Strategy for developing a distance learning ESL programme.....	416
11.4.1 <i>Proposal One -- Reorganisation of the English Proficiency Programme (EPP)</i> .....	416
11.4.1.1 Reasons for recommending this proposal.....	418
11.4.2 <i>Proposal Two -- Learner Training</i> .....	418
11.4.2.1 Preparation of the teachers .....	421
11.4.2.2 Preparation of the learners.....	423
11.5 Limitations of the thesis.....	426
11.6 Concluding remarks .....	427
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	 <b>428--454</b>
 <b>APPENDICES.....</b>	 <b>i--cviii</b>

# Table of Figures

Fig. 1.1 Nature of twinning programmes offered by private institutions in Malaysia...	6
Fig. 2.1 Structure of the present Malaysian public education system.....	41
Fig. 2.2 Information on Malaysian Universities.....	45
Fig. 2.3 Chronological establishment of distance education/off-campus centres in Malaysian Public Universities.....	47
Fig. 2.4 A diagrammatic representation of the various parties involved in the delivery of the courses.....	51
Fig. 3.1 Piaget's stages of cognitive development .....	92
Fig. 4.1 Research methods used for the various studies.....	117
Fig. 4.2 Research Design.....	118
Fig. 4.3 List of drawbacks in using a questionnaire and measure to minimise them .....	121
Fig. 4.4 Breakdown of respondents according to categories.....	127
Fig. 4.5 Breakdown of items under each scale/subscale and its meaning.....	132
Fig. 5.1 Kolb's learning style model.....	151
Fig. 5.2 Skehan's interpretation of Willing's two dimensional framework of learning style .....	153
Fig. 5.3 My interpretation of Willing's framework of learning style.....	155
Fig. 5.4 Willing's psychological model of learning style differences.....	157



Fig. 6.1 Format of the USLPCQ.....	170
Fig. 6.2 Breakdown of subjects according to categories.....	173
Fig. 6.3 Breakdown of subjects according to their home states and age-groups .....	174
Fig. 6.4 Breakdown of the number of respondents in the various categories ....	177
Fig. 6.5 A comparison of the mean scores of different types of learners.....	179
Fig. 6.6 Ranking of general preferences according to mean scores (in descending order). ....	180
Fig. 6.7 A diagrammatic representation of the selection process for the distance learners .....	184
Fig. 6.8 A diagrammatic representation of the selection process for the on- campus learners .....	185
Fig. 6.9 A comparison of Factor I and Factor II of the distance learners and the on-campus learners.....	186
Fig. 6.10 A comparison of Factor III and Factor IV of the distance learners and the on-campus learners.....	187
Fig. 6.11 Characteristics of the various learning styles groups.....	194
Fig. 6.12 Positions of the six types of learners identified in my study.....	195
Fig. 6.13 Breakdown of the distance learners into learning style groupings ...	197
Fig. 6.14 Breakdown of the on-campus learners into learning style groupings.	198
Fig. 6.15 Comparison of common learning styles groups between the distance learners and the on-campus learners .....	199
Fig. 6.16 Comparison of learning style groupings of the distance learners among proficiency levels .....	203
Fig. 6.17 Comparison of learning style groupings of the on-campus learners among proficiency levels.....	204
Fig. 6.18 Comparison of learning style grouping of on the distance learners and the on-campus learners among proficiency levels .....	205
Fig. 6.19 Comparison of learning styles groupings of distance learners among disciplines.....	208
Fig. 6.20 Comparison of learning styles groupings of on-campus learners among disciplines.....	209
Fig. 6.21 Comparison of learning styles groupings of the distance learners and on-campus learners.....	210



Fig. 7.1 Students' attitudes to studying: The four most distinctive items from each factor.....	233
Fig. 7.2 The three main factors of Biggs' Inventory.....	234
Fig. 7.3 Factor analysis of Approaches to Studying scales .....	240
Fig. 7.4 Summary of item factor analyses.....	243
Fig. 8.1 Breakdown of the items under each scale of the RASI.....	269
Fig. 8.2 Breakdown of the items under each scale of the NASI. ....	272
Fig. 8.3 Meaning of the scale/subscales of the NASI.....	273
Fig. 8.4 A breakdown of respondents according to categories .....	275
Fig. 8.5 A breakdown of the respondents according to age groups .....	276
Fig. 8.6 Comparison of mean scores per question of the distance learners and on-campus learners .....	278
Fig. 8.7 Mean scores of the distance learners and on-campus learners for the six categories.....	286
Fig. 8.8 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels .....	289
Fig. 8.9 Mean scores of on-campus learners from the three different proficiency levels.....	290
Fig. 8.10 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three different disciplines	293
Fig. 8.11 Mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different disciplines .....	294
Fig. 8.12 Comparison of mean scores across modes and across proficiency levels.	296
Fig. 8.13 Comparison of mean scores across modes and across disciplines.....	298
Fig. 8.14 Factor solutions of the NASI in the distance learners and the On-campus learners .....	302
Fig. 9.1 Dimensions of learning environments derived from factor analysis of the first version of the CPQ.....	320
Fig. 9.2 Students' perceptions of learning contexts in different subject areas.....	323
Fig. 9.3 Factor analysis of Course Perceptions scales.....	324
Fig. 9.4 Subscales of the ASI and the CPQ.....	326

Fig. 9.5 Factor analysis of Approaches to Studying and Course Perceptions scales	329
Fig. 9.6 Correlations between orientations to studying and performance under different extreme conditions, controlling for disciplines .....	334
Fig 9.7 Scales of the NCPQ and explanation of the meaning of scores for each of the scale. ....	341
Fig. 9.8 Breakdown of the number of respondents in the various categories .....	343
Fig. 9.9 Comparison of mean scores per item of the distance learners and the on- campus learners .....	345
Fig. 9.10 Mean scores of the distance learners and the on-campus learners for the five selected scales .....	349
Fig. 9.11 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels ...	351
Fig. 9.12 Mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three proficiency levels .....	352
Fig. 9.13 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three different disciplines	354
Fig. 9.14 Mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different disciplines .....	355
Fig 9.15 Factor solutions of the NCPQ scales in the Distance learners and the On- campus learners .....	359
Fig. 9.16 Comparison of the NCPQ items that loaded on Factor I and Factor II of the Distance learners and the On-campus learners.....	361
Fig. 9.17 Comparison of the NCPQ items that loaded on Factor III and IV of the distance learners and on-campus learners .....	365
Fig.9.18 Coherent and significant loadings of Common Factor I and Common Factor II .....	367
Fig. 9.19 Comparison of mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners for Common Factor I and Common Factor II.....	368
Fig.9.20 Factor solutions of the combined ASI and NCPQ scales in Distance Learners and On-campus learners .....	370
Fig. 10.1 Breakdown of the distance learners who took part in the individual interviews. ....	381
Fig. 10.2 Common themes identified from the analyses of the NCPQs .....	383
Fig. 11.1 A description of division of students under this new proposal.....	417



# CHAPTER 1

## Setting the scene

### 1.1. Background to the research problem

This chapter sets the scene for my research, and is divided into two parts. In the first part I will discuss the factors leading to the expansion and development of distance education in Malaysia. In the second part, I will discuss the position of English in Malaysia, and how this affects students' proficiency levels in English.

#### 1.1.1 Factors leading to the expansion and development of distance education in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multiracial country with a population of approximately 21 million people. It consists of Malays and other indigenous groups (who are called the 'Bumiputera' or the sons of soil); Chinese, Indians, and smaller communities made up of Arabs, Sinhalese, Eurasians and Europeans. The Bumiputeras can be divided into three broad categories: 'Orang asli' (aborigines); Malays (who form the predominant group in the Malay Peninsula); and Malay-related groups (which consist of ethnic groups found in Sarawak and Sabah) (Malaysia, Information Malaysia Yearbook, 1997). The cultures and religious practices are also very diverse. One thing all of them share, however, is the belief that higher education is important. According to Md. Razali and Md. Yassin (1995:1), Malaysian students (and their parents, too) of all races view higher education to be the door to success, wealth, power, happiness or even survival in their future lives. To them, the ability "to enter an institution of



higher learning means a reward or a recognition of their intellectual abilities after successfully negotiating three public examinations in their eleven years of primary and secondary schooling" (Md. Razali and Md. Yassin, 1995:1). This attitude towards higher education has led to many sacrifices on the part of parents to ensure that their children get the opportunity to further their studies.

The Malaysian Government in its policies also indicates that it is clearly aware of the advantages of education for the building of the nation and the society. This is evident in the National Philosophy of Education, which states:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going endeavour towards developing the potentials of individuals in a total and integrated manner in order to produce individuals who are balanced and harmonised in terms of the intellect, spirit, emotion and the physical based on belief and obedience to God.

This endeavour is to produce Malaysians who are knowledgeable, of high moral character, responsible, capable of achieving personal well being and able to contribute towards the harmony and prosperity of society and the nation.

(Solomon, 1988:55)

The Government also realises the potential of education as a restructuring force for the imbalances within society. Since education is an effective instrument in initiating social mobility and increasing social status, it is very suitable for this purpose (Siraj et al., 1993:6). One of the primary goals of the Second Malaysia Plan formulated in the aftermath of the May 1969 racial riot (See Chapter 2 for more information on this racial riot) was to restructure society as described below:

Greater attention will be given to ensuring that Malays, other indigenous people and the poor of other races have greater access to higher education in the sciences and other disciplines essential for effective participation in modern activities. More scholarships and bursaries will be made available to these people to pursue courses of study in colleges and universities in Malaysia and abroad. Facilities for higher education will be expanded so that it will be possible for all Malaysians to have access to the kind of education suited to their talents and interests.

(Malaysia, Second Malaysia Plan, 1971:41-45)

In order to achieve this goal, a quota system, which allocates places in local, public universities according to the racial composition of the country (Watson 1983:147), was devised. Students of Chinese origin (in particular) benefit the least in this new system of distributing places, as they do not fit into the priority list. Many of them have no choice but to further their education in private institutions locally and abroad. The Government also sent a large number of students, particularly Malay students, overseas for further studies. This was aimed at creating "a new generation of politically and educationally sophisticated urban Malays with increasing aspirations and expectations" (Watson, 1983:147). This practice has been severely reduced recently in view of the economic crisis.

The Government is also aware of the importance of education towards achieving the goals of 'Vision 2020'. The primary aim of 'Vision 2020', which was the brainchild of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Dr Mahatir Mohamad, is the creation of a Malaysian nation that is politically, socially, spiritually and culturally advanced (Hassan, 1994). The paper entitled, 'Malaysia: The way forward' (Malaysia, 1991), which later evolved into Malaysia's 'Vision 2020', lucidly states the importance of development of human resources in order to achieve the goals of 'Vision 2020':



From the experience in the last two decades of all the economic miracles of the countries that have been poor in terms of 'human resources', it is blindingly clear that the most important resource of any nation must be the talents, skills, creativity, and will of its people. What we have between our ears, at our elbow and in our heart is much more important than what we have below our feet and around us. Our people are our ultimate resource. Without a doubt, in the 1990s and beyond, Malaysia must give the fullest emphasis possible in the development of this ultimate resource.

(Malaysia, The way forward, 1991)

The general awareness of the importance of a good education in Malaysia has led to a huge demand for higher education opportunities in Malaysia. The Malaysian Government has endeavoured to meet this demand, and in the last three decades there has been a remarkable expansion of tertiary education opportunities in Malaysia. In 1968, there was only one university in Malaysia but the number has risen to nine today. On top of that, a substantial number of polytechnics has been built and the number of private institutions offering tertiary education programmes, has also increased dramatically. Despite this rapid expansion, the number of places offered is still insufficient to meet the ever-increasing demand. According to the Malaysian education statistics of 1991 (cited by Harun, 1993:7), approximately, 200,000 students annually completed their secondary education and out of this figure only about 10,364 i.e. (5.2% of them) were allocated places in a Malaysian public tertiary institution. The number has increased significantly in recent years. According to Dato' Seri Mohd. Najib Tun Abd. Razak, the former Malaysian Minister of Education, 29,365 students (i.e. approximately 14.68% of the total student population) were allocated places in public tertiary institutions in 1997 and the figure was increased to 36,279 (i.e. approximately 18.14%) in 1998 (Abd.Razak, 1998a). However, these figures are still dismally low when compared to those of developed OECD countries in the world, such as the United States of America, Canada, Germany and United Kingdom (Dhanarajan, 1998).



The low level of participation in tertiary education is due to two factors. First, to Malaysian public tertiary institutions inability to offer enough study places to students. and second, to what Md.Razali and Md. Yassin (1995) called the practice of the "elite access to higher education" (p.1). This limits access to a selected few students who have attained above-average intellectual abilities, talents or capabilities, which are determined by their achievements in a particular public examination. Dato' Seri Mohd. Najib acknowledged this when he said, "our education system is very much examination-driven and oriented towards examination" (Abd. Razak, 1998b). As a result of the Government's inability to meet this demand, parents whose children cannot make it to the local public tertiary institutions, have two main alternatives if they want their children to further their studies, i.e., to enrol them in a private institution locally or abroad. However, with the increase in tuition fees and exchange rates, overseas education is presently beyond the means of many parents.

This leads to the logical question of what the government is doing to overcome the ever-increasing demand for higher education in Malaysia. As mentioned earlier, more tertiary institutions have been established, but this move is far from sufficient to meet the demand. The sending of students overseas is no longer a viable solution as it leads to massive outflows of the country's foreign exchange. For example, in 1996, about 61,000 Malaysians were studying at foreign universities on government scholarships with a total cost of US\$1.5 billion a year (Asian Business, May 1996 cited by Mohammad, 1999:54). The Government is, therefore, keen to discourage parents from sending children overseas and, in order to do so, it has to offer attractive alternatives. For this purpose, several measures were undertaken by the Ministry of Education under the stewardship of Dato'Seri Mohd. Najib Abd. Razak, the former Minister of Education. Permission was granted to a selected number of overseas universities to establish private universities and branch campuses in Malaysia. A selected number of local private institutions, which are affiliated to overseas Universities, were also given permission to offer three plus zero (3+0) programmes (Abd. Razak, 1998c). These programmes are different from the normal

twinning programmes, such as the two plus one programme (2+1), two plus two (2+2), and three plus one (3+1) programmes (see Fig 1.1 for an explanation of these programmes).

Type of programme	Nature of programme
2+1	students have to study two years in a local private institution and one year in an accredited university overseas.
2+2	students have to study two years in a local private institution and two years in an accredited university overseas.
3+1	students have to study three years in a local private institution and one year in an accredited university overseas.
3+0	students are allowed to undertake the full duration of their programme in a local private institution and will be awarded a degree from an accredited university overseas.

Fig. 1.1 Nature of twinning programmes offered by private institutions in Malaysia

In addition, a number of major Malaysian Public listed Companies were given permission to set up privately owned universities. All these expansion plans were made possible by the amendment of two acts namely, the 'Universities and University Colleges Act, 1995' and the 'Institute Technology MARA Act, 1996', and the introduction of three more acts: the 'Private Higher Education Institutions Act, 1996'; the 'National Council on Higher Education Act, 1996' and the 'National Education Institutions Act, 1996'. As pointed out by Laidin (1997) in his plenary lecture:



These acts are to pave the way for Malaysia to increase the capacity of enrolment in higher education and at the same time put in place quality control measures, on par with international standard of higher education. The immediate impact of the Private Higher Education Institution Act can be seen immediately with the establishment of privately-owned universities, i.e. Petronas University, Telekom University, and Tenaga National University. Foreign Universities are also able to set up branch campuses or to collaborate with Malaysian partners such as the case of Malaysia University of Science and Technology (a private university) in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

(Cited by Mohammed, 1999:54)

These measures undertaken for expansion of the education opportunities were also in line with the plans of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). The MSC (measuring 9 miles by 31 miles or 15 km by 40km) encompasses the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, Putra Jaya and the International Airport. It was designed to become a centre for state-of-art products such as teleservices, gate services, remote data services and banking services. Included in these plans was the decision to make Malaysia a regional hub for education by encouraging more private and foreign educational institutions to set up joint-ventures, twinning facilities and branch campuses in Malaysia (Mohammad, 1999:56).

These plans also included the expansion and development of distance education. The Government has set as a target that 40% of Malaysians should be receiving tertiary education by the year 2020 (Abd. Razak, 1998a) and, to achieve this, distance education has a major role to play. Prior to the mid-1990s, only one university, which was, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)(the Science University of Malaysia) offered distance learning courses. However, due to the considerable attention of the Government of Malaysia on developing distance education, presently, all but the two newest public universities are participating in the off-campus/distance education scheme, each with its own programme and own system of managing and running it. (See Chapter 2 for more information on the development of distance education in Malaysia).



### 1.1.2 The Position of English Language in Malaysia

Since this thesis is concerned with the learning of English in the Malaysian context, it is essential for me describe the position of English in Malaysia. Prior to the 1970s, there were two main types of schools in Malaya: National schools and national-type schools. Bahasa Malaysia, known as the 'Malay Language' at that time, was the medium of instruction in national schools. English language was the medium of instruction in one of the three categories of national-types schools. The medium of instruction in the other two categories was Mandarin and Tamil. However, in 1970, the Education Enactment Bill, which decreed the replacement of English by Bahasa Malaysia in all schools except the vernacular primary schools (Chinese and Tamil Primary), starting from Primary One, was implemented. English was still maintained as a strong second language and was taught as a subject from year one of all Malay medium schools and year three of Chinese and Tamil schools. Up to today this system is still in operation.

In spite of the change in policy, English continues to be widely used in high courts and in the diplomatic service, by the mass media and in the local and international business, except for transactions which involve government departments. Socially, English is widely used as a language of communication in urban areas amongst upper and middle classes, whereas Bahasa Malaysia or the various local dialects are mainly used in rural areas (Pillay, 1998). Despite its importance, there has been a growing concern over the decline in the proficiency levels of students in English. This concern was voiced by the previous Minister of Education, Dato' Dato'Seri Mohd. Najib Abd. Razak who announced that a quantum leap was needed to improve English standards (1998b). This decline, to a certain extent, was due to the limited time allocated for the English Language in schools. Greater emphasis was put on the teaching and learning of English with the introduction of the KBSR and KBSM (integrated Primary and Secondary schools curricula) in 1982 and 1987 respectively, but this did not arrest the decline. One of the reasons for this was

because it was not compulsory for students to pass The English Language paper in the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) (Lower Secondary Assessment in Form Three) and the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) (Malaysian Certificate of Education in Form Five). Another more important reason was that students in the rural areas did not have much opportunity to use English outside the classroom. Pillay (1995) discovered that students who had high levels of competency tended to come from English speaking homes, have greater exposure to English outside the classroom and tended to come from higher socio-economic status group. Those with lower levels of competence tended to come from either rural schools where exposure to English was limited or from low socio-economic groups in urban areas. There is high probability that this trend is still in existence in Malaysian schools.

The Government is aware of the importance of English, especially in meeting the goals of 'Vision 2020', but it cannot be seen to promote English at the expense of Bahasa Malaysia without offending a large proportion of the populace. So up to today, it is still not compulsory to pass English in the PMR and the SPM. However, the government has plans to improve proficiency levels amongst secondary school and university students. (This will be discussed further in 2.3.4.)

In the case of public universities, after the racial riot in 1969 (see 2.3.4 for more information on this), the use of Bahasa Malaysia was 'forced' on Universiti Malaya (UM)(the University of Malaya), the only university in Malaysia at that time. Bahasa Malaysia has been used as the medium of instruction in all subsequently established public universities. Although Bahasa Malaysia is the medium of instruction, a large proportion of the academic texts used in the universities are in English. This poses a very serious problem to students, especially those from rural areas who generally have low proficiency in English (Pillay, 1995). To help these students, all public universities offer English Proficiency Courses (EPCs) for their students. These ESL courses are also designed to better equip the university students for the private sector that conducts its business mainly in English. With regard to



universities offering distance learning programmes in Malaysia, they continue the practice of offering EPCs to the distance learners. Although the mode of delivery has been changed the contents of the EPCs remain the same except for some changes to the materials provided. In addition, face-to-face tutorials have been given as support by all such universities. See Chapter 2 for more information on the distance learning programmes offered by USM and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)(The National University of Malaysia), the university under investigation in this thesis.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

In the implementation of distance education by Malaysian public universities, many factors have to be taken into consideration. First, each university has to assure that the system adopted meets the goals and aspirations of the Malaysian government and the Malaysian people. In addition, issues regarding how to convert a normal on-campus system to a dual-mode system, where both on-campus and distance learning programmes run concurrently, have to be thought out carefully (Dhanarajan, 1998). Issues of how to utilise available technology also require due consideration. More importantly, issues regarding the needs of the learners and how to cater to these needs must be considered. The attempt to represent the challenges faced by Malaysian public universities that follows is viewed from a personal perspective of the situation as the writer has been teaching in the field of TESL in a public university in Malaysia for sixteen years, and has been involved in developing distance learning English courses. In view of that, it is appropriate that the first person pronoun be used in some of the discussion.



A review of literature on distance education in Malaysia and my personal observation of the situation revealed that Malaysian public universities have undertaken serious efforts to tackle problems related to distance education. However, they also revealed two very disturbing features. First, there appears to be a lack of co-operation among the various participating universities. USM was a pioneer in this field and has organised several seminars/conferences on distance education, including a national conference on distance education in 1993 to allow participants from various parts of the country to exchange information on distance education. However, there has not been any direct exchange of personnel, or sharing of technology, as far as I know, among these universities. It appears as if each university has been working on its own in deciding what issues to emphasise and prioritise, and this has resulted in the overlapping of programmes and interests. In the beginning of 1999, an attempt was made to form a council comprising all the vice chancellors of all the public universities involved in distance education to work towards developing a national distance learning curriculum. To my knowledge, this attempt has not been successful.

Second, it revealed that insufficient attention has been given to the needs of learners. Daniel (1999) stated that one of the key ingredients in an effective distance education system is teaching rooted in research. My observation of the Malaysian distance learning scenario revealed that there is a lack of literature on the needs of distance learners in Malaysia. Granted, the staff of USM distance learning centres has published a number of articles on the needs of these learners, but such publications are rather rare as far as the other universities are concerned. This is not surprising as the distance learning programmes of the other universities are not as well established as that of USM.

Thus, it is evident that there is a necessity to carry out more research in the field of distance learning in Malaysia. The present thesis is an attempt to provide more information on the needs of distance learners in learning English in UKM with a

view to providing a basis from which its distance learning programme may be improved, and from which other Malaysian universities may benefit. I have decided to focus specifically on the learning of English in a distance learning context for the following reasons: first, my review of literature revealed that the studies undertaken on the needs of Malaysian distance learners (mostly from USM) focused on the learning of content courses. To my knowledge, no research has been undertaken that specifically focuses on the needs of Malaysian distance learners in learning English as a Second Language (L2).

Second, my survey of the five public universities offering distance learning courses (see Fig. 2.3) revealed that these universities have given no special consideration to the teaching and learning of English when designing their distance learning programmes. They seem to assume that it is possible to learn English in the same manner as the other content courses. Thus, English courses have been given the same type of support system as the content courses. Admittedly, the English language Proficiency Departments of the various universities have been allowed to design their own course materials and assessment procedures in the manner they consider suitable, but all these have to fit into the stipulated format of each university overall distance learning system. In addition, in designing their courses, the psychological needs of the students, including students' readiness for this mode of learning have not been given much consideration. Preparations to help the students to be more autonomous have also not been incorporated in the courses. How effective are such systems in the teaching and learning of English? These are some of the issues that this thesis aims to explore. More in depth discussion of these issues will be given in Chapter 3 when discussing the applicability of theories of distance learning and language learning to learning English as L2 in a distance learning context.

Third, since my area of training and my interest are in TESL (Teaching of English as a Second language), it is appropriate for me to carry out research in this area. The final reason that has prompted me to undertake this research is the dearth of literature



in the learning of English as L2 in the distance learning context. A research in this area will be a significant contribution to knowledge in this area.

## 1.3 Context of the problem

The sample population for the research was taken from one public university in Malaysia, that is UKM, which is located in Bangi, about 35 kilometres South of Kuala Lumpur. It comprised on-campus learners and distance learners of three different proficiency levels in English (Low, Average and High) and from three disciplines (Arts, Science and Business Administration). The 'target group' was the distance learners. The on-campus learners were included to allow a comparison to be made between the two groups of learners. The English Proficiency courses (EPCs) offered to on-campus learners and to distance learners by UKM are similar. The courses offered are of two types: General English Proficiency Courses (GEPCs) and Higher Level Courses (HLCs).

Prior to the 1998/99 session, the GEPCs were divided into four levels:

VG 1013 – Elementary level

VG 1023 – Pre-intermediate level

VG 1033 – Intermediate level

VG 1043 – Upper-intermediate level

As for the HLCs, they comprise English for Specific Purposes (ESP)/ English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) courses, which include English for Social Sciences, Applied Sciences, Law, Medicine, Business and Nursing; and other advance level



courses such as Critical thinking, Interactive Reading, Speech Communication, Public speaking and Writing Skills.

Students were placed into the various courses according to their level of proficiency. For example, students with A1 and A2 in the Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM) (Malaysia Certificate of Examination) were placed in VG 1043, students with C3 and C4 were placed in VG1033 and so on. Students who had taken the one-year matriculation course run by MARA Institute of Technology and selected Malaysian Universities were placed according to their results in the matriculation examination. SPM holders with results more than four years old and students with diplomas from other institutions of higher learning had to sit for the English Placement Test (EPT) run by the English language Proficiency Department. (See Appendix 1A for more information on criteria and conditions for placement of students in the EPCs).

Students had to pass 12 units of English. Each English course comprised 3 units, which meant each student had to pass four courses. For example, if a student started off at the highest level i.e. VG 1043, then he/she would have to follow that with three ESP/EOP/ other advance level courses. If a student started off at the lowest level i.e. VG 1013, he/she would have to follow that with VG 1023, 1033, and 1043. (See Appendix 1B for more information on the types of courses each category of students had to take prior to the 1998/99 session)

However, beginning from the 1998/99 session, it was felt that too much money had been channelled into the teaching and learning of English in UKM, something the university could ill-afford in this economically troubled time. In view of this change in policy, the English Proficiency Department was instructed to phase out some of its courses. Of the four GEPCs, VG 1013 and VG1043 were taken out. A point put forth in support of this move was that it gave all students an opportunity to take ESP/EOP/advance level courses. Formerly, students starting at the lowest level i.e.

VG 1013 were deprived of this opportunity. To cut down the student population, exemptions were given and free credit units awarded to the better students. For example, students who obtained A1 and A2 in the SPM and Matriculation exams were given 6 free units and exempted from VG1023 and VG1033. (See Appendix 1C for more information on criteria and conditions for exemptions and awarding of free credits units). This means that better students took fewer English courses. (See Appendix 1D for more information on the courses each category of students has to take beginning from the 1998/99 session).

Although the courses offered to distance learners and on-campus are similar in nature, some modifications were made in the mode of delivery and the materials provided to the students. The 'wrapped-around approach', proposed by Rowntree (1992), which is a midway compromise in that it does not involve producing materials from scratch nor transforming existing materials, is used in preparing the materials for these courses. (See Appendix 10B for a sample lesson based on this approach). In addition, the formal assessment process is slightly different. In the case of on-campus learners they have to sit for two examinations i.e. a mid-semester exam and a final exam, whereas distance learners have to sit for only a final exam. This is due to the fact that it is not economical to conduct two formal assessments for the distance learners. As for dissemination of information, it has been limited to mainly providing printed materials and cassettes. Plans to incorporate other methods of student support in the form of more advanced means of communicating information and tutoring and more support facilities, such as resource centres and counselling, have been discussed but not concretised. Since no research has been undertaken to determine the needs of distance learners, decisions on which types of support system to prioritise have been based mainly on assumptions and opinions (for more information on the English Proficiency Programme of UKM see Chapter 2).



I believe that using UKM as the base for this research is appropriate for the following reasons: first, UKM launched its distance learning programme in the main campus on 1 October 1995,. but, so far, no research on the needs of distance learners in learning English has been undertaken. In view of that I believe there is a genuine need to carry out research in this area.

Second, since I am a staff member of the English Proficiency Department of UKM, I have first hand information of the workings of the department and that of UKM. This makes collection of data easier. More importantly, I am in a position to be actively involved in plans for developing the EPCs for distance learners in line with the findings of my research. Thus, this research has implications both for the work of the university and for my own professional practice and development.

Finally, since the distance learning systems used by all five Malaysian public universities in offering English Proficiency programmes are fairly similar, a thesis investigating the needs of distance learners in UKM in coping with their EPCs will have great relevance to these universities, and other public universities intending to offer distance learning programmes.

## 1.4 Scope of the research

Although I would very much like to investigate the various types of needs of the distance learners in learning English, which could include physical needs, social needs, cultural needs, learning needs, environmental needs and many others, it is not possible to do so within the scope of this thesis. In view of that I decided to target at learning needs which can be viewed from three main perspectives: (1) the perspective of the society, (2) the institution and (3) the learner. The aspect that is of



particular interest to me is the 'processes of student learning' viewed from the perspective of the learner, for the following reasons. In 1983, Entwistle and Ramsden pointed out that little attention had been given by researchers to the process of student learning in higher education and the effects of teaching on it. As a result, little was known about the effects of lecturers' teaching, assessment, and course organisation on student learning. Since then, a great deal of work has been done in this field (see Chapter 7 for a review of some of this work). Although there were variations in the methods utilised by these researchers in exploring process of student learning, most of them confined their research (like that of Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) to the investigating of student learning of academic subjects in conventional-mode universities, and very few explored the distance learning context (see for e.g., Morgan, et al., 1980; Harper and Kember, 1986; and Richardson et al., 1999).

My review of second language research literature has considered numerous studies attempting to identify processes of student learning (approaches and styles of learning, strategies in learning, cognitive strategies and many others) that enhance or hinder the progress in learning another language in the hope of refining a model of second language education that would promote more successful learning among a greater number of students. The majority of these studies, however, focused on students learning a second language through the conventional mode, i.e. face to face, with a teacher. In recent years, some research on the process of students learning a second language in a distance learning mode has emerged, but they are still rare (see for e.g., Oxford, 1993; White, 1995). A detailed discussion of the literature is given in Chapter 5.

Having confined the scope of this research to the determination of learning needs by investigating the processes of student learning and perceptions of distance language learning courses, the next stage is to consider how to approach the task at hand, bearing in mind that the overall objective of this research is to devise a strategy for developing a distance learning ESL programme for the Malaysian context. After an

extensive review of literature and drawing upon the findings of the pilot studies, I decided to adopt the research ideas and methods of Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) and Willing (1988) in formulating the parameters of this research. Based on their work, I surmised that it would be most apposite for the purpose of my research to explore the processes of student learning through the investigation of: (1) Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their own learning styles in learning English (2) their conceptions of their approaches to studying in general (i.e. in studying all subjects), and (3) their perceptions of the EPCs they have taken. (See Chapter 4 for a detailed rationale for the methodology adopted).

For (1) and (2), I decided to make a comparison between on-campus learners and distance learners in an attempt to find distinct differences between them which will contribute towards the understanding of the effects of mode of delivery on the processes of student learning. I have yet to come across a study in this particular area that focuses on ESL learners, thus the research findings will be particularly timely. I also took into consideration the effects of proficiency levels and disciplines on these learners to find out whether proficiency levels and disciplines have any effects on these processes of learning. For (3), as in (1) and (2), consideration was given to the effects of mode of delivery, proficiency levels and disciplines being studied (since students of all disciplines have to study English, as well) on perceptions of courses. In addition, the study investigated whether there were any associations between approaches to studying in general and perceptions of courses. Finally, an interview section was included in (3) to add validity to the investigation. A more detailed description of this is given in the Research Design section of Chapter 4.

Although the three studies of this thesis were carried out only on the Malaysian ESL (English as a second language) learners of one public university, namely UKM, I believe there is strong possibility that the findings can be generalised to other such learners in other public universities in Malaysia in view of the similarities in the way



the English programmes are run and in the types of students attending these universities.

## 1.5 Research perspective

Having discussed the scope of the thesis, it is now essential to discuss the theoretical background of this thesis. As mentioned in the previous section, the parameters of this thesis were formulated by drawing upon the research ideas and methods of Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) and Willing (1988). To position these parameters within a wider framework, it would be appropriate to say that they operate within a constructivist construct which believes in "the centrality of learners in constructing their own knowledge and understanding" (William and Burden, 1997:3). This construct exists within the framework of cognitive learning and experiential learning theories. These encompassing concepts will be discussed in the relevant sections in Chapter 3. In this section, I will focus on discussing how the ideas and methods of Entwistle and Ramsden (1983), and Willing (1988) were brought together to formulate the theoretical framework of this thesis.

The primary concern of this thesis is the exploration of students' experiences of learning. There is vast amount of existing work undertaken on on-campus undergraduates studying content courses by notable researchers in this field, such as Perry (1970), Saljo (1979a, 1979b, and 1979c), Marton (1976); Pask (1976a and 1976b), and Entwistle and Ramsden (1983). The thesis drew upon such research in its attempt to extend the explorations of student learning to Malaysian ESL distance learners. A five-year Social Science Research Council Research Programme (which began in 1976) undertaken by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) to investigate the processes of student learning and to determine the extent to which these reflected the

effects of teaching and assessment demands, is particularly significant to this thesis as the theoretical framework for this research is largely based on it. Their research undertaken to extend, conceptually and empirically, the work of Marton and Pask in relation to a previous study on students carried out at Lancaster comprised six main areas:

1. The measurement of approaches to and styles of studying, using an inventory.
2. The exploration of the cognitive skills, cognitive styles, and personality characteristics underlying different approaches to studying.
3. The extension of Marton's studies on reading academic articles, using a questionnaire.
4. The identification, by questionnaire, of students' perceptions of the academic 'climate' of departments.
5. The use of interviews to investigate students' strategies in carrying out particular types of academic task.
6. An investigation of how contrasting academic contexts appear to affect the approaches to studying adopted by students in those departments.

(Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983: 29)

The present research covers three of the above research areas, that is Areas 1, 4 and 6. The scope was deliberately confined to the three areas considered most pertinent to this research to enable more in depth and focused discussions of the issues at hand.

Area 1: The measurement of approaches to studying was undertaken by using a modified version of Entwistle and Ramsden's inventory to suit the ESL context.

Area 4: The identification, by questionnaire, of students' perceptions of the academic 'climate' of departments was undertaken with some



modification to adapt to the 'climate' of the English Language Proficiency Department of UKM.

Area 6: The focus of this area was changed to the investigation of the effects of different modes of delivery (i.e. on-campus vs. distance learning) on the approaches of and styles of studying English by students.

The areas were further extended to include a comparison across three disciplines (Sciences, Arts and Business Administration) and across three proficiency levels (Low, Average and High).

Interviews were also carried out in this thesis but they were not aiming at investigating students' strategies in carrying out particular types of academic task, as in the case of Entwistle and Ramsden's research, but rather to enable a better understanding of students' perceptions of the EPCs offered to them. Thus, the purpose of the qualitative data is, principally, to enhance the validity of the research through the provision of further insights into and clarification of the quantitative data. As in Entwistle and Ramsden's research, there was a marrying of qualitative and quantitative methods (see Chapter 4 for justification of methodology used).

The two key concepts in the theoretical framework of Entwistle and Ramsden's research (1983) were **context** and **study processes**, with **context** referring to the academic environment within which the students learn. In my theoretical framework, these two key concepts remain crucial, but in my case, **context** refers to learning in an ESL context at a distance. Learning a content course is very different from learning a second language, as second language researchers would testify. Sussex (1991:189) pointed out that "languages are more difficult than most subjects to learn because of the complex combination of skills and information required for mastery". White (1994:11) added that since language is a highly complex set of systems, structures, and rules, the processes required to gain control

of this system are not the same as those required in content subjects such as history and sociology. Thus, the conceptual basis for this research is broader than that of Entwistle and Ramsden's in the sense that it also encompasses literature from the fields of second language learning and distance learning. The other key concept, **study processes**, has also been modified to accommodate the second language learning context by incorporating relevant research ideas and methods from Willing's study (1988) that explores ways and means of identifying and accommodating different learning styles in English language teaching programmes. His work will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

## 1.6 Research questions

Having delineated the scope of the research and the research perspective of this thesis, it is now appropriate to present the research questions. The overall objective of this thesis is :

To devise a strategy for developing a distance learning ESL programme, based on identification of Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning processes and their perceptions of courses, which has applicability to and beyond the Malaysian context.



To achieve this overall objective it is necessary to:

1. determine to what extent the English Proficiency Programme offered to the Malaysian ESL distance learners is able to accommodate their conceptions of their learning styles in learning English and their approaches to studying in general (i.e. in studying all subjects); and their perceptions of the English Proficiency Courses.
2. assess the effects of modes of delivery, proficiency levels and disciplines on Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning styles in learning English and their approaches to studying in general, and their perceptions of the English Language Proficiency Courses.
3. determine whether there are any associations between approaches to studying in general and perceptions of courses.

These objectives have led me to seek answers to the following research questions in three research studies:

### **Study One: Conceptions of Learning Styles in learning English**

- (1) Are the Malaysian ESL distance learners' conceptions of their learning styles in learning English different from those of the Malaysian ESL on-campus learners and, if yes, in what ways?
- (2) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **distance learners'** conceptions of their learning styles in learning English different from each other and, if yes, in what ways?
  - (i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.

- (3) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **on-campus learners'** conceptions of their learning styles in learning English different from each other and, if yes, in what ways?
- (i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.
- (4) Are there any differences between (2) and (3)? If so, what are they?
- (5) What are the implications of the above findings for the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context?

### **Study Two: Conceptions of Approaches to Studying in general**

- (1) Are the Malaysian ESL distance learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying in general different from those of the Malaysian ESL on-campus learners and, if yes, in what ways?
- (2) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **distance learners'** conceptions of their approaches to studying in general different from each other and, if yes, in what ways?
- (i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.
- (3) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **on-campus learners'** conceptions of their approaches to studying in general different from each other and, if yes, in what ways?
- (i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.



(ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.

(4) Are there any differences between (2) and (3)? If so, what are they?

(5) What are the implications of the above findings for the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context?

### Study Three: Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses

(1) Are the Malaysian ESL distance learners' perceptions of their English Proficiency Courses different from those of the Malaysian ESL on-campus learners and, if yes, in what ways?

(2) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **distance learners'** perceptions of their English Proficiency Courses different from each others and, if yes, in what ways?

(i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.

(ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.

(3) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **on-campus learners'** perceptions of their English Language Proficiency Courses different from each others and, if yes, in what ways?

(i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.

(ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm.) students.

(4) Are there any differences between (2) and (3)? If so, what are they?

(5) Using modes of studying as unit of analysis rather than individual students, what associations between orientations to studying and course perceptions can be

identified? In other words, are Malaysian ESL distance learners' and on-campus learners' perceptions of their English Proficiency Courses influenced by their approaches to studying in general?

- (6) What are the implications of the above findings for the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context?

## 1.7 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eleven chapters.

### **Chapter 1 – Setting the scene**

This chapter sets the scene by first presenting a background to the research problem, and then it proceeds to provide a statement of the problem, the context of the problem, and the scope of the research. This is followed by a delineation of the research perspective and the research questions. In conclusion, an outline of the thesis is given.

### **Chapter 2 – Education in Malaysia**

This chapter begins by presenting a brief history of Malaysia up to its independence on 31 August 1957. Then it proceeds to describe the development of the Malaysian education system. This is followed by a brief description of the present Public Education System. After that, it describes the distance education system of USM, (the first university to offer distance education in Malaysia), and then the distance education system of UKM (the University under investigation in this thesis) and concludes by making a brief comparison between them.



### **Chapter 3 – Theories of distance learning, second language learning, and adult learning**

This chapter begins by giving a brief review of the evolution and definitions of distance education. Then it presents a summary of the views of the main theoretical models of distance education. After that, the applicability of these models to the UKM context is discussed. This is followed by a discussion of theories of first and second language learning, and of the applicability of relevant language learning theories to the ESL distance learning context. An explanation for the decision to adopt a constructivist construct is included in this section. In the next section, theories of adult learning is reviewed. In conclusion, I will define the theoretical construct of my thesis.

### **Chapter 4 – Methodological considerations**

This chapter starts by describing the more prevalent features of both the quantitative and the qualitative approach. It also discusses more recent literature on research traditions relevant to this thesis, and the integration of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research design of this thesis, justification of the methodology adopted, and a report of the pilot studies undertaken are also included in this chapter.

### **Chapter 5 – Study One**

#### **Conceptions of learning styles in learning English: Focusing on the literature**

This chapter begins by presenting and discussing some of the definitions of learning styles. Then, it proceeds to discuss the various dimensions of learning styles. Discussion of empirical studies that have relevance to the study is incorporated. Finally, Willing's study (1988) is reviewed in considerable depth in order to provide a clear understanding of the theoretical background to the research in this study.

## **Chapter 6 – Study One**

### **Conceptions of learning styles in learning English: Focusing on the data**

This chapter investigates the conceptions of learning styles of Malaysian ESL learners in learning English as L2. Willing's learning style questionnaire is utilised for this purpose. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first, describes the research design of this study, and the second, the analysis of data. The data are analysed quantitatively with the use of the SPSS (9.0) package, and this is accompanied by relevant discussions of results. Finally, the implications of the findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context are discussed.

## **Chapter 7 – Study Two**

### **Conceptions of approaches to studying: Focusing on the literature**

This chapter starts by looking at education research that is related to student learning. It focuses on the works of the major groups of researchers in the field of student learning. Then it proceeds to offer the theoretical rationale for investigating approaches to studying. This is followed by a review of Entwistle and colleagues' Approaches to Studying Inventory. Events leading to the development of this inventory, development of the pilot studies, and a description of the main study are discussed in depth in this section, to provide the necessary theoretical background. Finally, empirical studies undertaken using the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) are discussed.

## **Chapter 8 – Study Two**

### **Conceptions of approaches to studying in general: Focusing on the data**

This chapter undertakes a comparison of the conceptions of approaches to studying of Malaysian ESL distance learners and on-campus learners from UKM. The chapter begins by discussing the research design, and proceeds to analyse the data quantitatively with the use of the SPSS (9.0) package. This is accompanied by



relevant discussion of the results. In the final section, findings from previous studies (discussed in Chapter 7) are drawn upon to help in the explanation of the overall results. Finally, the implications of the findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context are discussed.

### **Chapter 9 – Study Three**

#### **Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses: Focusing on the New Course Perception Questionnaire (NCPQ)**

This chapter is a follow-up study to Study Two. It begins by giving a detailed description of the development of the Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ) by Entwistle and Ramsden. A review of some of their studies, which used the CPQ, are also included to provide some background information, and to enable a better idea of what to expect from the present study. This is followed by the research design where the scope and objectives of the study, and the rationale for using the New Course Perceptions Questionnaire (NCPQ) and the interviews are described. The research methodology section is next. Finally, the data of the NCPQ are analysed quantitatively, and the results discussed.

### **Chapter 10 – Study Three**

#### **Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses: Focusing on the interviews**

The chapter begins with a description of the research design, and then proceeds to analyse the results in two ways. First, the results obtained from the analyses of the NCPQs are used to derive themes that act as the framework to examine the data from the interviews. Second, the interviews are explored further in an attempt to gain deeper insights into the interviewees' beliefs about the learning of English. Finally, the chapter discusses the implication of the findings of the NCPQs and the interviews to the teaching and learning of English as L2.

## **Chapter 11 – Summary, pedagogical implications, strategy for developing an ESL distance learning programme**

In this final chapter of the thesis, the main findings, and the implications of the three studies to the teaching and learning of English as L2 are summarised. This is followed by a description of the strategy for developing a distance learning programme, devised based on the findings of this thesis. Next, some of the limitations of the studies undertaken in this thesis are listed. In conclusion, the significance of this thesis is recapitulated.



## CHAPTER 2

# Education in Malaysia

### 2.1 Introduction

It is important to view the development of distance education in Malaysia from an appropriate perspective. This I will endeavour to provide by first presenting a brief history of Malaysia up to its independence on 31 August 1957. Then I will proceed to describe the development of the Malaysian education system. This is followed by a brief description of the present Public Education System. After that, I will describe the distance education system of USM (the first university to offer distance education in Malaysia) and also the distance education system of UKM (the University under investigation in this thesis) and conclude by making a brief comparison between them.

### 2.2 A brief history of Malaysia

Malaysia is made up of Peninsular Malaya, often referred to as West Malaysia, which forms the southern-most portion of the land mass of Southeast Asia, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak, which occupy the northern quarter of the island of Borneo. Historically, Hindu influence in the Malay Peninsula (now Peninsular Malaysia) began in the first century AD, but this was replaced gradually with Islam in the early fifteenth century, with the rise of the Malacca Sultanate. This was a golden period in Malayan history. The strategic location of Malacca made it the

centre of trade and commerce between East Asia and West Asia. As for Sabah and Sarawak, at that time, it was part of the progressive Brunei Sultanate.

In view of its strategic location, Malacca attracted the attention of major Western powers of that time, and in 1511, it was conquered by the Portuguese, which brought to an end the Malacca Sultanate. In 1641, the Dutch replaced the Portuguese and in 1788, Malacca fell into the hands of the English. At the same time, Sabah and Sarawak were also colonised by the British (Siraj, 1993:35).

The three main ethnic races in Peninsular Malaya are the Malays, Chinese and Indians. "The Malays were the first known civilised inhabitants in Malaya and Singapore" (Wong and Ee, 1975:6). As for the Chinese, they had been coming to Malaya in small numbers from Kwangtung, Fukien and Kwangsi since the foundation of the Malacca Sultanate. Mass emigration of Chinese to Peninsular Malaya came at the end of the nineteen-century with the abolition of anti-emigration laws by China. The Chinese mainly concentrated in the urban areas and they worked mainly in the tin mines or were involved in commercial enterprises. At the same time, Indians were recruited by the British to work in rubber estates. "The number of Chinese and Indian immigrants increased to such an extent that, before World War II, Malaya was the only country in Southeast Asia where the immigrant races, the Chinese and Indians, together outnumbered the original inhabitants" (Wong and Ee, 1975:8).

From 1941 to 1945, Malaya was under the rule of the Japanese and after the Second World War, the British returned to resume their rule. In 1948, the Federation of Malaya Agreement, under which each state or settlement retained its own individuality though all were united under a strong central government, was adopted. This was followed by the Federal Constitution in 1955, which transferred most of the responsibilities for the Government of the country to the elected representatives. The



Alliance party under the leadership of Tengku Abdul Rahman won the elections of July 1955. The party worked towards achieving independence for Malaya and, on 31 August 1951, Malaya achieved its independence. In 1963, Malaysia, comprising the states of Peninsular Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, was formed but in 1965 Singapore withdrew from Malaysia and established itself as a city republic.

The present education system of Malaysia is a product of the various political, social, economical changes that have occurred within and without the country throughout its history. In the next section, I will discuss the Malaysian education system, and tensions in the system that resulted from this history. Issues relating to the medium of instruction and language policies will be given specific emphasis as these relate to the status of the English language, and the proficiency of students in English.

## 2.3 The Malaysian education system

I have decided to describe the history of the Malaysian education system by classifying it under four periods of Malaysian history namely: (1) before the arrival of the British, (2) with the arrival of the British, (3) after the Second World, and (4) after the May 13, 1969 racial riots. There are numerous studies pertaining to the education system in Malaysia which deal with it from the historical, political, cultural and racial perspectives (Mohamed, 1973; Sulaiman, 1975; Chan, 1977; Sidin, 1980), but since it is not the purpose of this research to delve in depth into political, cultural and racial issues, I will, as far as possible, attempt to present a historical, chronological description of the Malaysian education system. However, issues relevant to the background of my study, will be discussed in detail.

### **2.3.1 Education before the arrival of the British (before 1824)**

Unlike other civilisations, early Malay society paid little attention to general education. It has been said that wandering Malay schoolmasters from the Straits Settlements might be employed as private tutors for the sons of sultans and chiefs. Many Malay aristocrats were also said to be illiterate. Instead, religious instruction dominated the education of early Malay society. Malay boys learned to read the Koran and the other teachings of Islam from a religious leader (Gullick, 1971; Alsagoff, 1985).

This was about the only form of formal education at the time of the nineteenth century Malay State. Education at that time was informal, narrow and ineffective (as it was limited only to the Koran and to boys) (Siraj et al., 1993:36). "A large part of the learning of skills was learnt in the performing of the daily tasks of the village. Specialised master craftsmen taught special skills like woodcarving, sorcery, letter writing, warrior skills of fencing and the making of fine daggers and talismans. (Loh, 1975; Alsagoff, 1985).

### **2.3.2 Education with the arrival of the British (1786-1956)**

During this period two types of schools emerged: the vernacular schools, that is, schools which operated in the Malay vernacular in the rural areas where the Malays predominated, the Chinese vernacular and the Tamil vernacular, and the English-medium schools in the urban areas where the immigrant races like the Chinese tended to concentrate. According to Wong and Ee (1975:8), this rural/urban dichotomy was partly due to the fact that the Malays were contented to live in the



rural districts on a rural economy whereas the immigrant races, particularly the Chinese, were more commercially-minded and preferred to live in the urban areas where trade flourished. Since English was the language of commerce, it was logical that they would prefer to enrol their children in English-medium schools. The result was parallel systems of schooling: (1) Malay vernacular schools for the rural Malays, which was established and maintained by the Government; (2) Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools set up by their respective communities; (3) Schools maintained by the government, which provided a Western education taught in English, for a mixed urban population.

### **2.3.3 Education after the Second World War (1946-1963)**

During the Japanese occupation of Malaya between 1942-1945 education suffered a severe setback. School buildings were damaged and the Japanese attempted to teach the Japanese language.

After the war, the political climate in Malaya had changed completely. It was realised that "it was essential to develop a common Malayan outlook if self-government were to succeed, and this was nearly impossible if the children were educated separately" (Wong and Ee, 1975:52). A committee was set up in 1949 to review the state of Malay education and in its report, called the Barnes Report, it recommended that the separate vernacular school systems be merged to form a 'national system' based on English and Malay (Wong and Gwee, 1972; Alsagoff, 1985). However, this idea was not totally accepted by all the communities and the idea was to be wrestled with in more committees after that. In 1956, a year before independence, Tun Abdul Razak, then the Minister of Education, took up the task of designing a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole. Under the new system there was a variety of primary schools, falling into two broad types: Standard Primary Schools in which the medium of instruction was

the Malayan National Language; and the Standard -Type Primary Schools in which the main medium of instruction was either Kuo-Yu, Tamil or English. Malay was made compulsory in all schools since it was the National Language. "To ensure that it was taught, a knowledge of Malay would be required for admission to all secondary schools supported wholly or in part from public funds, and for entry into government service. English was also made a compulsory subject because of its utilitarian value" (Malaysia, The Razak Report, 1956:1). In secondary schools, the medium of instruction might be Malay, English or Chinese. The report also emphasised the need to work towards the development of a common syllabus for all schools in Malaya in order to establish "a national system of education which will satisfy the needs of the people and promote their cultural, social, and political development as a nation " (Malaysia, The Razak Report, 1956:18).

The fact that English primary and secondary schools were allowed to continue led to an influx of students to these schools resulting in the enrolment in English primary and secondary schools being twice as large as in Malay schools by 1967. This was a source of discontent among Malay fundamentalists. Besides that, the Malays resented the growing affluence of the Chinese and they felt that they were losing what was rightfully theirs. All these factors, together with a feeling of helplessness at their inability to exert influence on the Chinese and Indians, (which was reflected in the 1969 Selangor State elections, where the opposition parties won enough seats to form the State Government of Selangor) culminated in the bloody racial riots of May 13, 1969 (Alsagoff, 1985:21).



### **2.3.4 Education after the May 13, 1969 racial riots (1969 up to 2000)**

As a result of widespread racial rioting, a state of emergency was declared. Parliamentary democracy was suspended and party politics banned. In the interim period a National Operations Council was formed, headed by the former Minister of Education who was then a deputy Prime Minister. The interim government, which was to last until February 1971, had among its top agenda the restructuring of the entire education system in Malaysia.

The first task concerned the medium of instruction. It was decided that all government-aided schools should progressively change to use Malay as the sole medium of instruction. The change was to begin with Standard 1 in 1970, Standard 2 in 1971 and so on until it was complete for the primary education in 1975, and secondary education in 1982. The gradual change was necessary because non-Malay teachers had to be retrained and Malay textbooks prepared. However, English was to remain as a subject and as a strong second language, while Chinese and Tamil could be taught as a subject and in that language (Alsagoff, 1985: 21-22).

Chinese and Tamil primary schools were allowed to continue for the primary education period of six years, after which the pupils went to a Malay language transition class and into Malay medium secondary schools. Article 152 of the country's constitution guarantees the right of education in the vernacular languages but Clause 21(2) of the Education Act empowers the education minister to change the medium of instruction of the Chinese primary schools whenever he/she feels satisfied that it is appropriate (Das, 1982).

In 1965, it was decided that, after six years of primary schooling for children from the ages of six to eleven years, promotion to secondary schools should be automatic. "Before this time, at the end of the primary education, students had to sit for the Malayan Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (MSSEE) which weeded out sometimes as many as 85 percent of the Malay-medium students" (Alsagoff, 1985: 22). Thus "comprehensive" education was extended for three more years of the lower secondary education for children between the ages of 12 to 14, after which, the students had to take the Lower Certificate of Education Examination. Upon passing, students between the ages of 15 to 16 continued for two or more years of upper secondary education, at the end of which, they sat for the School Certificate Examination. From there, they went to technical or vocational colleges or proceeded to post-secondary education that prepared them for the University entrance examination.

The sudden influx of students into secondary schools in 1965 resulted in acute shortages of trained teachers. "The problems of language transition and rapid expansion of schools in the mid-1960s through the 1970s was further compounded by the tradition of arid academic teaching" (Alsagoff, 1985:23). Wong and Gwee (1972) described this as:

Memorisation and close reproduction of facts and details is exalted above the students' understanding, interpretation and application of knowledge learnt (add to this) the overloaded curriculum, the overloaded syllabus, the heavy examination orientation.

(Wong and Gwee, 1972: 158)

All these factors led to a large numbers of students dropping out of school early and many others who could not even read nor write, even in the language that was their medium of instruction (Malaysia, Lapuran Keciciran, 1973). Consequently in



January 1982, a new system of primary education for all primary schools was introduced whereby 77 percent of primary school hours were devoted to the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. More importantly, the acquisition of these basic skills was to be taught innovatively through experiences such as projects, excursions, plays and puzzles. This was followed by the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM)(The United Secondary School Curriculum). The aim of this curriculum was to produce balanced students who were in harmony intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically (Malaysia, KBSM, 1989). Greater emphasis was put on the teaching and learning of English in the KBSR and KBSM. However, this was not able to arrest the decline of students' proficiency levels in English. This problem was particularly acute in rural areas (Pillay: 1995). (This has been discussed in Chapter 1.) In an attempt to solve this problem, the Ministry of Education set up two committees to plan programmes to improve proficiency levels amongst secondary school and university students (Pillay, 1995).

Before the war, the education systems of Sabah and Sarawak were very similar to the one in Peninsular Malaya. Since Malay is not an indigenous language in these two states, it is not widely spoken and hence the people of Sabah and Sarawak were eager to retain English as the medium of instruction. However, in line with the Third Malaysia Plan, the education of these Borneo states was "progressively integrated with the national system" (Malaysia, Third Malaysia Plan, 1976:Paragraph 1310).

The next major development in the Malaysian education system was the introduction of 'smart schools' in 1997. The idea was mooted by the former Education Minister of Malaysia, Dato'Seri Mohd. Najib. According to him, there was an urgent need to transform the education system of Malaysia to meet the challenges of the modern technological era. The important aspects in Malaysian education system that needed to be transformed included curriculum, administration, teacher education and evaluation. He believed that the creation of 'smart schools', which were designed towards producing intelligent, creative individuals with a strong love for modern

communication tools, would help Malaysia in achieving this transformation. He further elaborated that these schools would facilitate individual-based learning by the use of extensive multimedia technology. Apart from that, there would be a revision of pedagogy, textbooks, assignment of students and school administration. The plan was for all schools to be 'smart' schools by 2010, with 85% of them achieving the status by 1999 (Fernandez, 1997).

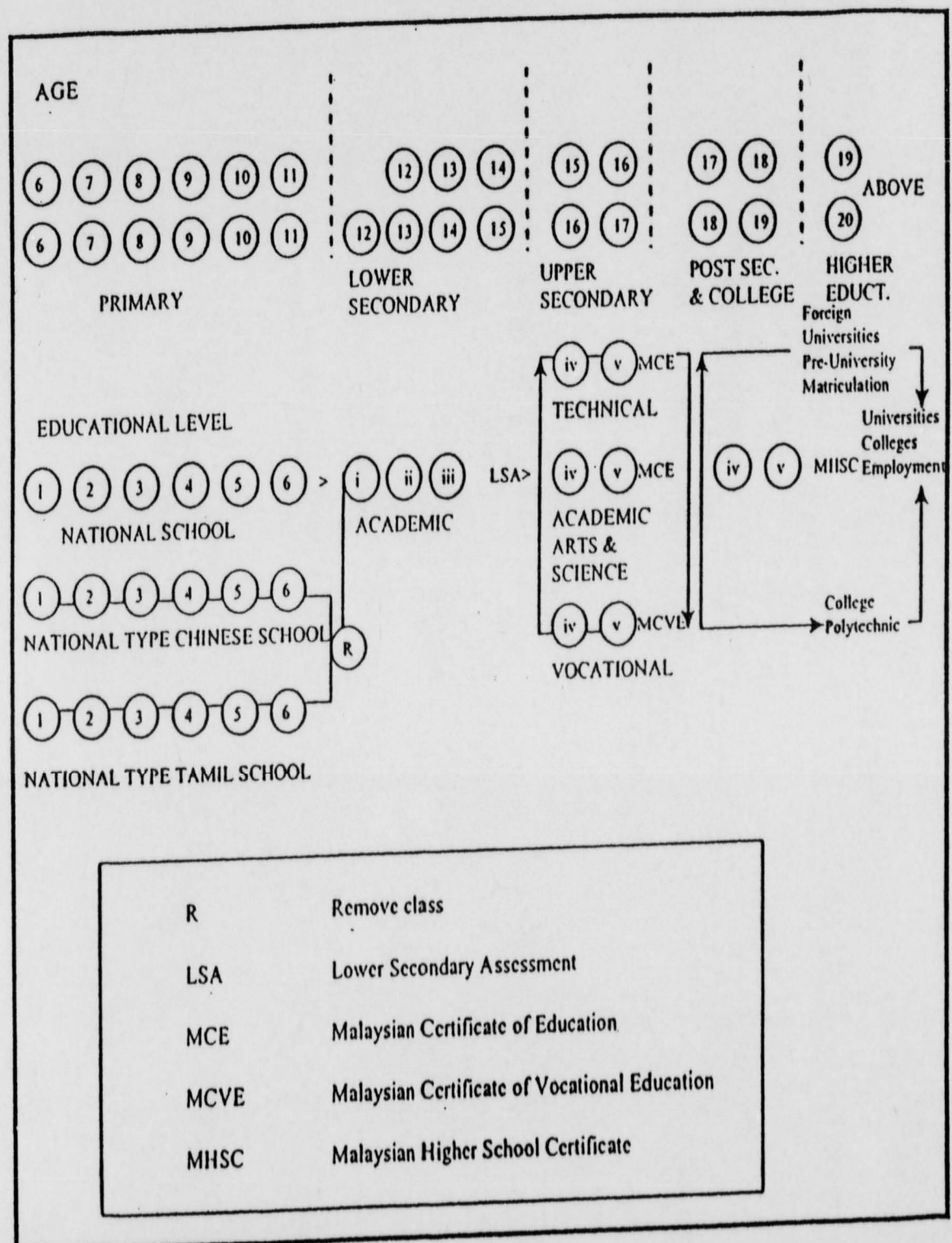
In my opinion, the cost of introducing such schools is very high and I doubt that it would be possible for Malaysia to achieve the goals set by Dato' Seri Mohd. Najib within the stipulated period. Despite that, I believe the implementation of 'smart' schools is a positive step in the direction of achieving 'Vision 2020' (Malaysia, The Way Forward, 1991)(see Chapter 1). In addition, it will contribute towards improving the general English proficiency level of Malaysian students, since the language of multimedia technology is mainly in English.

## 2.4 Malaysian public education system

Having presented the history of the Malaysian education system, it is appropriate that I proceed to give a brief outline of the Malaysian public education system to provide the essential link to the next section on the university system in Malaysia. I will begin with a brief mentioning of the primary education system and then proceed to describe the secondary school education system in greater detail.

Primary education is free for all citizens of Malaysia. It is compulsory for all Malaysians to enrol their children in schools when their children are six years old. The structure of the present public education system is summarised in Fig.2.1





Note: Figure does not include primary level

Fig. 2.1 Structure of the present Malaysian public education system

As can be seen in Fig 2.1, secondary education is divided into three main levels, i.e., lower secondary, upper secondary and pre-university level. On completion of primary school education at the age of 12 plus, pupils are automatically promoted to secondary school education. At the end of their third year in secondary schools, they have to sit for a public examination, known as the *Penilaian Menengah Rendah* (PMR) translated as Lower Secondary Assessment (LSA). Compulsory subjects in the examination include Bahasa Malaysia (the Malay language), English, History, Geography, Mathematics, Science, and Living Skills/Islamic Education (compulsory for Muslim students).

The students then proceed to the upper secondary level, i.e., Form 4 and Form 5. There are four streams in this level: arts, science, technical, and vocational. Students are allocated the various streams based on their performance in the PMR. At the end of two years in the upper secondary school, students from the first three streams have to take a public examination, the *Sijil Peperiksaan Menengah* (SPM) (Malaysian Certificate of Education), whereas vocational students have to take the *Sijil Peperiksaan Menengah Vokasional* (SPMV) (Malaysian Certificate of Vocational Education). Currently the majority of upper secondary schools offer arts and science streams, whereas technical schools and vocational schools offer technical and vocational training, respectively.

The third and last tier of the secondary education system (known as Sixth Form) comprises two-year pre-university education. Entrance to this level is based on performance in the SPM/SPMV. As a general rule, only students with grade one in the SPM/SPMV are accepted. There are three streams in Sixth Form: arts, science, and technical. A public examination marks the end of this final stage of secondary education. Students' performance in this final examination, known as *Sijil Tinggi Peperiksaan Malaysia* (STPM) (Malaysian High School Certificate) determines whether they will be allocated places in the Public Universities or Colleges.



Allocation of places is according to the racial composition of the country (Watson 1983:147). In addition to Sixth Form, there are also residential schools where pupils (mainly Bumiputra students) may gain entry. These schools offer alternative one-year pre-university education known as Matrikulasi A level (Matriculation A level) to the STPM.

## **2.5 A brief historical review of university education in Malaysia**

There are now eight national universities in Malaysia. The latest additions are the Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (UNIMAS) and the Universiti Sabah Malaysia (UMS) established in 1993 and 1994 respectively. The oldest University in Malaysia is the University of Malaya, which was established in 1949 and was based in Singapore at that time. In December 1961, it was split into the University of Singapore, which remained in Singapore and the University of Malaya, which moved to a campus in Petaling Jaya, near Kuala Lumpur. The University of Malaya (UM) was officially established on 1 January 1962. "The development of the University of Malaya in the 1950s and 1960s was based on a western model centre of learning and research, and on high academic standards" (Alsagoff, 1985:25-26).

Subsequent to the Razak Report of 1956, the Education Review Committee recommended that the UM used Malay, as well as English, as the medium of instruction to accommodate the Malay-medium secondary students who were passing out of the new school system. Implementation was problematic and it was not until the 1980s that most of the courses were converted to Malay.

In the mid-1960s, four more universities were established. In 1969 Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) was formed, and in 1970, University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). In 1971 and 1972 respectively, the long established College of Agriculture and the Technical College were upgraded. They were renamed Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) respectively. This was followed by the formation of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) in 1984, and finally, UNIMAS and UMS (see Farham, 1999).

In addition to these national universities, there is an International Islamic University, known as Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) in Malaysia. It was established in 1983. In contrast to the other universities, which are totally funded by the Malaysian government, this university receives funding from a number of Muslim governments. "Although this university is Islamic in character, its student body is made up of foreign and local students from all races and religions" (Farham, 1999: 327).

UKM was the first Malay Medium University. It was set up to prove not only that the teaching of university courses in Malay was possible, but that it would produce satisfactory results (Wong and Gwee, 1972). This it did, and subsequent universities used Malay as the medium of instruction. UM and USM which were established before it also followed suit. The change was a gradual process, beginning with the Arts faculties, followed by the Science faculties, and then more specialised faculties, such as medicine, engineering and law. By 1980s, the medium of instruction in all public universities were in Malay, except for the Islamic University of Malaysia which still runs courses both in English and Malay. (See Fig. 2.2 for details of all Malaysian public universities.)



Name of University (in Malay)	Name of University (in English)	Year of establishment	Location
1. Universiti Malaya (UM)	University of Malaya	1962	Kuala Lumpur
2. Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	The Science University of Malaysia	1969	Penang
3. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	The National University of Malaysia	1970	Bangi, Selangor
4. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), formerly Universiti Pertanian Malaysia	University Putra Malaysia	1971	Serdang, Selangor
5. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	University Technology Malaysia	1972	Skudai, Johor
6. Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (IIU)	The International Islamic University	1983	Kuala Lumpur
7. Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	The Northern University of Malaysia	1984	Sintok, Kedah
8. Universiti Sarawak Malaysia (UNIMAS)	Universiti Sarawak Malaysia	1993	Kucing, Sarawak
9. Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	University Malaysia Sabah	1994	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

Fig. 2.2 Information on Malaysian Universities

As discussed earlier, the change in the medium of instruction in schools from English to Malay has led to a decline in proficiency level in English among students. This has led to universities offering English Proficiency Courses (EPCs) to help university students to improve their English. With the introduction of distance learning, it was automatically assumed that the EPCs offered to on-campus learners could be revised to suit the needs of distance learners. In the next section, I will discuss the history of distance education in Malaysia, and the distance education programmes of two universities in Malaysia, including UKM, the university under investigation in this thesis. The EPCs of these universities and the effectiveness of these courses will also be considered.

## 2.6 The history of distance education in Malaysia

Mohammed (1999:49) suggested that one of the earliest programmes that contributed to the introduction of distance education in Malaysia was the non-formal education organised by a variety of government bodies from 1950s to 1960s to offer 'second chance education'. The evening classes catered for those who were over-aged for regular school but still wished to improve their education. However, according to Hashim and Alsagoff (1999:19-22) the distance education in Malaysia began with the provision of correspondence courses by private colleges, such as Raffles Correspondence College, Malaysian Correspondence College, Adabi College, and Federal College. They offered distance learning courses through the post to students who wanted to further their education at Form Five or Form Six levels (equivalent to O'level and A'level). As for tertiary education, the University of London was the first university to work together with the Malaysian Examination Board in offering external degrees through correspondence courses and is still doing it.

There was no official distance education programme in Malaysia before 1970, but the Ministry of Education gave serious consideration to the future development of a distance education system when they were planning Further and Continuing Education Programmes. This was reported in the Higher Education Planning Committee Report of 1964. The report further stated that it had always been the Government's policy to provide education opportunities to all citizens but, due to limited financial allocations, efforts to democratise education had to be slowed down. These efforts would nevertheless include offering continuing education to adults from all age groups and revision and training courses to those in Government's service to inform them of the latest development in their respective fields. It recommended that, besides offering courses through the post, other facilities, such as radio and television, should be utilised to deliver lectures and lessons, especially in areas that had no educational facilities. It also recommended that facilities for



continuing and further education be increased to enable adults to pursue their studies in Arts, Science and Technology and other fields of interest to them to certificate, diploma and degree levels (Hashim and Alsagoff, 1999; Dasuki, 1993)

The report further suggested the launching of a part-time degree programme and the establishing of the Department of Continuing and Further Education with its own head at UM. However, UM failed to take up this suggestion and, instead, USM and UPM, individually, took up the challenge of establishing off-campus educational programmes for undergraduates. USM officially launched its formal distance education programme on 8 November 1970 and is generally acknowledged as the pioneer and the most established University in this field in Malaysia. UPM started by offering an informal distance education programme through the Centre for Development and Continuing Education (Dasuki, 1993). It was not until the 1990s that other public institutes of higher learning started to participate in distance education. (See Fig. 2.3 for the chronological establishment of distance learning/off-campus centres in Malaysian public universities.)

University	Year of establishment
Universiti Sains Malaysia	1971
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	1993
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	1993
Universiti Malaya	1996
Universiti Putra Malaysia	1996

Fig. 2.3 Chronological establishment of distance education/off-campus centres in Malaysian Public Universities.

### 2.6.1 USM's distance education system

A distance education programme was first established in Malaysia in 1971 at USM. It was first offered through a section under the University's Centre for Educational Services. It was known as the Unit Pengajian Luar Kampus (UPLK)(the Unit for off-Campus studies) (Dasuki, 1993, Alsagoff, 1985).

The aims of the distance education programme in USM, which continues up to today, are as follow:

- ❑ To enable adult students, who for one reason or another, do not get the opportunity to pursue higher education conventionally, obtain a degree qualification;
- ❑ To make a higher education programme available to economically deprived and geographically isolated areas;
- ❑ To increase the rate of training of society members in order to fulfil demand for qualified manpower;
- ❑ To improve the productivity of those already in the work force by upgrading their knowledge and skills.

(USM, 1996:1)

To these formative aims the Senate added the following objectives, which were meant to safeguard the standards and credibility of the University's credits offered through the off-campus programme:



- ❑ To provide a diversified program of studies to enable the off-campus students to obtain a standard of academic excellence similar to that required of on-campus students.
- ❑ To devise new approaches to teaching and learning that can overcome partially or fully the problems of distance between the place of residence on the one hand and the place of instruction on the other;
- ❑ To organise annually a three to four weeks intensive course to enable students to meet with their instructors and their peers and to supplement independent learning with face-to-face learning at the main campus.
- ❑ To make it compulsory for distance learners to study and reside full-time in the University for the last year of their distance learning programme.

(Dhanarajan, 1990:83)

To further safeguard itself from unknown difficulties the University declared the programme to be an experimental one from the start (so that it could be terminated without too much legal exposure should serious problems develop). This meant the University could not provide or commit a lot of resources to this innovation. As such, growth of the programme was rather slow during the first decade. It was only in 1981, after graduating 700 students and two rigorous external evaluations later, that the programme was able to receive full university and government endorsement. To begin with, the University offered courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences. However, by 1973, due to pressure especially from the Ministry of Education, courses in the Natural Sciences and Mathematics were also included in the programme (Dhanarajan, 1990).

Since USM's distance education programme is run by a conventional university, it is not surprising that it retains for all distance learners all of the academic entry qualifications such universities impose on prospective students. However, because the University's major objective was to provide an opportunity to men and women in employment, certain non-academic criteria were also imposed. These include:

- All applicants, except those coming into the Science Foundation Programme, should be above 21 years of age.
- Candidates from the public services should be tenured.
- Candidates should have written consent from their employers to attend the residential schools, final year on-campus stint and examinations.

(Dhanarajan, 1990:84)

The USM distance education programme went through some changes with regard to minimum length of study required for obtaining an undergraduate degree. From 1971-1974, students registering for the programme required a minimum of four years to obtain a degree. They had to study three years off-campus and the final year, on-campus (3+1). From 1975-1980, the minimum number of years to obtain a degree off-campus was increased to 4 years with 1-year on-campus (4+1). This was in keeping with the new system, which increased the minimum duration of studying for a full-time Bachelor degree with Honours from 3 to 4 years. In 1981, the minimum length of studying for a degree off-campus was further increased to 5 years with one-year on-campus (5+1). These changes were a consequence of research and assessment carried out by the University and the Education Ministry (Dasuki, 1993).

In 1983, the UPLK was upgraded to Pusat Pengajian Luar Kampus (PPLK) (the Centre for Off-Campus studies). With this change in status, the PPLK centre was now able to employ its own staff, plan its own curriculum, administer the existing courses, and implement its own support system. At this stage, however, PPLK was still not allowed to award its own degrees. In 1985 to 1986, there were efforts undertaken to try to convert the (5+1) system to (6+0), but the plan was postponed. It was only in 1993 that a fully off-campus mode was allowed to operate, beginning first with the Arts students and followed by the Science students (Dasuki, 1993). Presently, the system for awarding degrees has been made more flexible. To obtain a Social Science degree, a Science/Arts with Education degree, or a Business Administration degree, the minimum number of years of study is 4 years and the



maximum, 12 years; and to obtain an Engineering degree, the minimum is 5 years and the maximum 12 years (USM, 1998).

### 2.6.1.1 Delivery model for content

Like any other organisation involved in distance education, the creative act of teaching is divided among different parties. See Fig.2.4 for a diagrammatic representation of the various parties involved in the delivery of content of the courses.

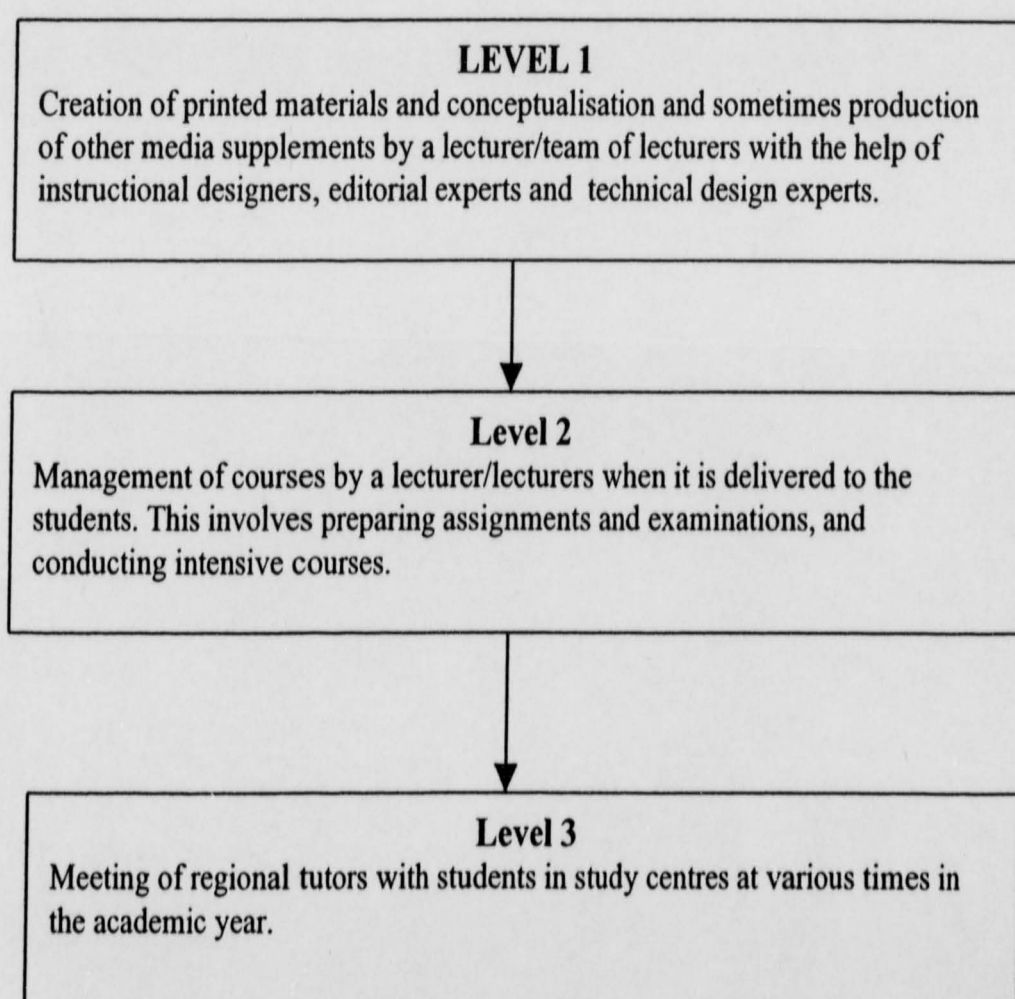


Fig. 2.4 A diagrammatic representation of the various parties involved in the delivery of the courses. (Dhanarajan, 1990:85-86)

### 2.6.1.2 Technology and Support Services

Initially, UPLK sent outlines of lectures and brief notes together with reading lists to distance learners but, when its status was upgraded to PPLK, great improvements were made to the materials sent to the learners. Printed teaching materials, called modules, with well-structured and well-planned teaching notes, complete with learner exercises that had been laid out for students to use independently, were designed and sent instead. In addition, multimedia self-instructional packages in the forms of video tapes, audiocassettes, and audio-graphics were also used (see Dhanarajan, 1990, and Dasuki, 1993).

In 1971, the UPLK decided to experiment with the use of 30-min/week-radio airtime given free to USM by Radio Malaysia. Although UPLK was aware that the small number of students did not justify the use of public broadcast media in the delivery of courseware, it was thought that a diversification in media was a pedagogic necessity. An earlier review of the distance education programme, which led to the recommendation that at least 30 percent of the courseware had to be in non-print media, made radio broadcast seemed even more appropriate. Radio broadcasts continued to be used for quite some time, but it soon became evident that a condition stipulated by the producer, requiring materials broadcast to be suitable for all levels of society, made it impossible for lecturers to exploit their subjects freely enough through this medium. So, the radio programmes were used instead to broadcast information pertaining to counselling (especially during examination periods), administration, and courses. The problem of frequent postponement and cancellation by the broadcasting organisation also rendered this medium unreliable.

In August 1987, PPLK introduced teletutorials (tutorials through television) through audio-conferencing and in 1989, another facet, the digital component, was added to the system. Audio graphic teletutorials provided both visual and verbal modes of



communication between a tutor (faculty) at the USM main campus and the distance learners in their respective regional centres all over the country.

To assist students in their learning activities, 15 regional centres were established throughout Malaysia in 1995. These centres, which are based in high schools or teacher training colleges, are managed by resident tutors with the assistance of part-time tutors. The centres act as local terminals for teletutorials, venues for continuous assessment, laboratories for science experiments, library and media services, and also meeting places for students to carry out discussions and group activities.

Besides attending regular teletutorials at their study centres, students also attend a mandatory three-week residential intensive course on the USM campus during the school holidays in November. The residential requirement is to provide opportunities for students to meet the faculty and staff of the centre, attend face-to-face classes and laboratory sessions, and foster a closer relationship among the students through social activities such as sports, cultural shows and an annual dinner.

In addition, counselling services are offered to distance learners. Initially, it was thought that counselling was not necessary since these distance learners were mostly adults with working experience and therefore should know how to succeed in their studies. But the much higher rate of failures and dropouts in USM in comparison to the Open University of United Kingdom suggested that this was not necessarily so. Lourdusamy et al. (1990) revealed that about 70% of Arts students managed to graduate within the allocated period of six years whereas only 40% of Science students managed to do so. The counselling system was set up in 1985. The crux of the philosophy for offering this service to off-campus learners is as follows:

The services and counselling given to the students should be holistic in nature. The counsellors should not only be concerned with giving advice on academic matters but should also give counselling on personal matters especially those affecting distance learners' academic performance.

(Dasuki: 1993:70)

Distance learners also have access to the USM library and those who live in other parts of Malaysia can use the local libraries in the various cities and towns or in Universities, Colleges or other Government Institutions, such as Teacher Training Colleges. In some of the regional centres, libraries have been set up with at least 1000 book titles. However, research showed that the library facilities were under-utilised (Darsuki, 1993:69).

With regard to the teaching and learning of English in USM, it was not possible to find out in detail how the EPCs courses were run due to lack of literature, and difficulty in obtaining such information from USM. However, from a discussion with five distance learners from USM, I found out that their distance learning English Proficiency Programme is similar to that of UKM in many ways. Similar to UKM, students are also placed in various English Proficiency Courses according to their proficiency levels, and they are required to pass a certain number of English Proficiency Courses to graduate. Support is also in the form of face-to-face tutorials. The difference is that these tutorials are not given at various times during the semester, but during the mandatory three-week residential intensive course on the USM campus during the school holidays in November.

Having discussed the USM distance education system, it is appropriate now to turn to the UKM distance education system, a relatively 'new' system, to draw a comparison of the two systems.



### 2.6.2 The UKM distance education system

UKM's faculty of medicine, which is based at UKM's branch campus in the General Hospital, was the first faculty of the university to offer a distance education programme. The programme, which offered specialisation in Family Medicine, was launched on 30 November 1993. Three main reasons led to the launching of this programme. They are:

1. The need to produce trained experts who were capable of providing clinical care to families, managing primary health care services, and providing the necessary leadership in improving the quality of primary health care services.
2. The necessity of providing a high quality programme without compromising the services given by the Malaysian Ministry of Health. This means that the training had to be given without the movement of the doctors involved from the hospitals they were currently serving.
3. The desire to establish a continuous education system suitable to the needs of the general medical professionals interested in pursuing specialisation.

(Shahabudin, 1995:12)

The distance learning approach was adopted based on research in continuing medical education (CME) which studied the learning process of general medical practitioners, the majority of whom were in 'social (professional), geography and temporal isolation' (Shahabudin, 1995:6). The findings showed that the doctors preferred self-directed study methods that did not require them to travel long distances for CME. The application of the research findings mandates two goals for distance education learning: to disseminate information and to assist in the learning process. Dissemination of information has been achieved through teleconferencing and the use of a learning package, which includes printed materials, videotapes, audiotapes, slides and pictures. Communication through e-mails, which will enable students to get access to tutorials, feedback on assignments and access to libraries and the Internet, has also been included. Every three months students have to assemble in the campus for a weekend course aimed at providing information and

expertise not fully available in the various centres (see Shahabudin, 1995). In addition, training workshops for supervisors and intensive courses in skills of self-directed learning for students have also been incorporated in the programme to inculcate self-directed learning techniques which are based on practice (such as learning based on problem-solving, reflections on actions, small-group discussions, clinical auditing, analysis of practice diary, learning based on analysis of patients' notes/charts and presentation of information by the use of multimedia among the students).

UKM launched its distance education programme at its main campus on 1st October 1995. Pusat Pengajian Luar Kampus (PPLK)(Centre for Off-Campus, Studies) was established to run the programme. The experience gained in distance learning in the Faculty of Medicine was used in discussing the challenges faced by the main campus in developing its distance learning programme. The main challenge confronting UKM was the formation of a philosophy and policy for distance education. In addition, the following have to be taken into consideration:

1. technology assessment and its appropriate use,
2. pedagogic quality,
3. faculty development,
4. credibility and accountability,
5. research, rewards and institutional support.

However, in view of the need to launch the programme as quickly as possible on the request of the Minister of Education to provide "an alternative to meet the increasing demand for tertiary education in the country" (Silong et al, 1995:2), it was not possible to carry out an in-depth study, such as the one carried out by the Faculty of Medicine. It was then decided to develop the distance education programme in the main campus in phases. For the first phase of implementation, which was expected to cover a period of three years, it was decided that only printed materials and cassettes



would be used as the main mode of delivery. This would be supplemented by exercises, assignments, projects and intensive classes that would be conducted by the lecturers involved. For the second phase, an interactive section, which would use the services of tutors trained by the various faculties involved together with equipment such as videos, teleaudio aids and e-mail, was to be included. The third phase was to incorporate an individual interactive system, which would allow student-lecturer-material interaction through a communication medium. This would mean removing tutors at the various centres, and having a centralised approach to tutoring.

The courses offered by UKM in the first semester were two Science courses, one Business Administration course and one Arts course. Since then, more and more courses have been added on. UKM plans to offer all its courses through the distance learning mode eventually.

The general aim of UKM distance learning programme is to increase opportunity for tertiary education for Malaysians. More specifically, it aims at:

- Giving individuals who are qualified for tertiary education the opportunity to study part-time or off-campus.
- Increasing opportunity for tertiary education to those in the rural areas.
- Increasing the number of professionals required by our fast-developing country.
- Acting as a balance to the large number of students taking twinning programmes in private institutions or studying overseas.
- Moving towards the democratisation of education.
- Providing educational opportunities at tertiary level more economically and efficiently.
- Fulfilling the aims of the programmes offered by the various faculties.

(UKM, 1998: 8)

Unlike USM, the academic entry qualifications imposed by UKM on distance learning students are much lower than those on on-campus students. There is no minimum age limit and candidates from public services are not required to be tenured. Students, however, need the written consent from their employers to join the programme. This is deemed necessary as tutorials are held on Saturdays and Sundays (and Saturday is a working day in Malaysia). It is estimated that students will take at least 5 to 6 years to obtain all the required units, but the university does not stipulate the minimum or the maximum number of years for completion of the programme. However, recently, students have been cautioned against taking too many units in one semester as it was found these students had poor overall performance.

### **2.6.2.1 Teaching/learning Components**

The programme of UKM (1998:8) consists of the following teaching/learning components:

#### **(1) Study Guides**

These are written to instruct and guide the distance learners through each course, and are supplied to each registered candidate. The Study Guides for the content courses are divided into several modules, and materials are prepared according to the modules. These materials are usually written by the lecturers/group of lecturers responsible for the various courses.

In the case of the EPCs, each Study Guide contains detailed instructions, tips and answers for the various exercises in the textbook (see Appendix 10B for a sample lesson from such a study guide). Some extra exercises may also be provided. The textbooks used for the GEPCs are the Headway Series by Soars and Soars. (See Appendix 2A for more information on these books). For the HLCs, the textbooks were chosen by the various course committees. Distance learners have to use their



study guide together with their textbook. This 'wrap around' approach (Rowntree, 1992) was adopted as it was not possible to produce the required materials in such a short span of time. The Study Guides were written by academic staff (normally two to a course) assigned to the task. These material writers were given a crash course on writing distance learning materials before embarking on their task. Besides providing study Guides, the English Proficiency Department (EPD) also provides the following:

- A schedule of learning to guide the learner in their studying of each course for each semester for each course (see Appendix 10C for a sample schedule). Activities covered by this schedule include the tutorial assignments, class tutorials, discussion classes, tests, intensive classes and examinations.
- Tutorial questions and sample exam questions: At least one set of each is provided for each course.

## **(2) Face-to-face intensive tutorials**

The purposes of these tutorials are to allow the lecturers to get to know the students, for discussion classes, for question and answer sessions, for lecturers to revise their courses, and for assessment of projects.

Distance learners taking EPCs have to attend to two tutorial sessions, one towards the fifth week of the semester and another towards the tenth week of the semester. Each tutorial session is from 8am to 6pm (with a lunch break of two hours from 12pm to 2pm). These sessions are used for different purposes depending on the courses concerned. They can be used for some of the following activities:

- general discussion of the course;
- discussion of the various units of the textbook and students' assignments;
- practising oral activities and listening activities;
- carrying out written tasks;
- Discussion of examination format and examination questions.

### 2.6.2.2 Delivery model for content

The classes for the distance learning students are held during the weekends. A schedule is issued to all students at the beginning of the semester informing them as to when they will have to attend the various classes. Students from different parts of the country attend courses at different times. Lecturers from UKM have to travel to the various regional centres to deliver courses (There are altogether 12 regional centres). In the case of EPD, the co-ordinators and assistant co-ordinators of the various courses are given first preference in choosing the centres they would like to go to give tutorials. Subsequently, other members of staff are signed up for the other tutorials. If there are still insufficient tutors, local tutors from the regions concerned will be signed up.

With regard to preparing assignments, projects and examinations, lecturers responsible for the courses have to undertake the tasks. In the case of EPD, committees under the leadership of a co-ordinator are set up to undertake these tasks. Lecturers or tutors teaching the various classes have to mark their own students' assignments and projects. As for the final examination papers, they are normally marked by members of the various committees. Other academic staff within the EPD may be enlisted if there are insufficient markers. The fees for writing materials, teaching courses, and marking exam papers are stipulated by the PPLK. Thus, it is evident that many academic staff in the university have many roles to play: as material writers, teachers, and examiners for both on-campus and off-campus courses. On top of that, they are expected to carry out research work. It is not surprising that many of them find difficulty in balancing the various roles. Complaints have been received from on-campus students with regard to the inaccessibility of their tutors. In response to that, the PPLK issued a resolution, at a workshop held on 2 February 1999 by PPLK to review the implementation of distance education at UKM. The resolution was that that lecturers involved in distance education should endeavour to balance their roles, in the faculty and in the



off-campus programme effectively. They, however, have not come up with solutions as to how this 'balancing' can be done.

### 2.6.2.3 Future plans

Within the last four years no major changes have been undertaken to the distance learning programme of UKM, although some revisions have been undertaken on the Study Guides, according to feedback obtained from tutors and distance learners. However, there are ongoing plans to improve the programme. Since there were no academic and support staff who possessed expertise in distance education, communication media, education technology and research, it was decided at the workshop held on 2 February 1999 that consideration should be given towards forming a team of experts to carry out research projects. It was further decided that the support system should be improved to include counselling, telephone services, peer support and others. It was also decided that training should be given to academic staff involved in distance education to familiarise them with the necessary skills required for teaching at a distance. More importantly, an assessment of the quality of the programme is to be carried out to ensure that the programme is of the same standard as the on-campus programme. In the pipeline are also plans to develop distance learning centres in neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and Brunei, and to offer new programmes at diploma and graduate levels.

With regard to changes in the mode of delivery, according to UKM Director of Distance Education (Dr Tajul Ariffin), UKM is considering several alternatives as to how to upgrade its programme. Negotiations have been carried out with several private companies offering on-line delivery systems. However, it is highly likely that UKM may not upgrade the technology involved in its programme. Instead, it will collaborate with the other public universities in Malaysia in developing distance learning modules accompanied by suitable advanced technology to reduce

competition and create consistency in the delivery of the programmes. A company known as Multimedia Technology Advancement Operation Limited. (METEOR), under the approval of the Ministry of Education, has been set up to spearhead efforts in the development of distance learning curricula. Each university will have a stake in METEOR and is represented by its Vice-Chancellor on the company's board. Each university will contribute by providing a certain number of courses to this new company which will be run as a separate distance learning centre.

### **2.6.3 Comparison of USM and UKM models of distance learning and conclusion**

UKM distance education system is much more flexible in comparison to USM in terms of conditions for entry, the number of units a student can take per semester, and the number of years required for the completion of a programme. This means that opportunity for tertiary education is open to a wider spectrum of learners in the case of UKM. With regard to the mode of delivery of materials, both universities follow a fairly similar system for all courses, including in the teaching of English. However, support in the case of USM comes in various forms, i.e., in the form of teletutorials through video-conferencing, face-to face classes during the school holidays, counselling, and radio broadcasting. In contrast, UKM, a relatively newcomer in distance learning in Malaysia, provides only face-to-face tutorials at various times of the year. In the teaching of English, both universities utilise only face-to-face classes. Despite that, it is clear that in term of technology and experience, USM is ahead of UKM.

Numerous research studies have also been carried out by USM on distance learning. Among these studies there are some on the needs of learners (see USM, 1993 for examples of some of these studies). These have guided the development of their distance education programme. However, none of these studies investigate the



teaching and learning of English. As for UKM, it is still behind USM as far as research is concerned, but recently a number of research studies on distance learning have been carried out to obtain deeper insights into ways of improving its distance learning programme.

The above comparison also reveals the need for improvements for both systems in the teaching of English in a distance learning context. For example, in designing materials and a support system, consideration has to be given to the needs of learners. There are indications that materials adapted from those prepared for on-campus learners are unsuitable, and a support system that is based purely on a limited number of face-to-face sessions per semester is inadequate. It is not possible to determine the appropriate changes to undertake to make the system more appropriate for the distance learners without carrying out further research. This thesis is an effort in that direction and has significant implications for development in this area.

## CHAPTER 3

# Theories of distance learning, second language learning and adult learning

### 3.1 Introduction

Since 'context' is one of the key concepts in the theoretical framework of this research, it is therefore essential to consider theories of distance education, second language learning and theories of adult learning to provide a better understanding of the conceptual bases of this study. Thus, in this chapter, I will begin by giving a brief review of the evolution and definitions of distance education. Then I will present a summary of the views of the main theoretical models of distance education. This will be proceeded by a discussion of the applicability of the theories of distance education to the UKM context. Following that I will review some prominent theories of first and second language learning, and discuss the applicability of some of these theories to the ESL distance learning context. In this section I will also explain what made me decide on a constructivist construct. Next, I will review theories of adult learning. In conclusion, I will define the theoretical construct of my thesis.



## 3.2 Distance education

### 3.2.1 The evolution of distance education

Distance education originated from what was known as teaching and learning by correspondence (Holmberg, 1995:3). Correspondence education/study has been known for several generations, mainly as part of adult education. Holmberg (1995:3) described correspondence education as teaching in writing; by means of so-called self-instructional texts, combined with communication in writing, i.e., correspondence between students and tutors. Correspondence education has gradually developed to include a number of media, for instance, recordings of the spoken word, radio and TV, video recordings, telephone and computer communication, and because of that, the term 'correspondence education' was felt by many to be too narrow a definition. Terms such as 'independent study' (Wedemeyer 1981) and 'home study' (Lambert 1983) were used as competing terms in North America. Australia and New Zealand preferred the term 'external study'. Since the early 1970s, 'distance education' is the designation that has gradually been adopted in the United Kingdom and Ireland (though resisted by the Association of British Correspondence Colleges), in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and other parts of the English-speaking world, as well as internationally.

From the end of the nineteenth century up to the 1960s, the distance-teaching education organisations, with a few exceptions, had been private correspondence schools, but since then, many publicly supported and established universities and schools have begun to venture into the field of distance education. One of the pioneers was the University of South Africa which started teaching at a distance in 1946. However, it was the founding of the Open University in the United Kingdom in 1971 which marked the beginning of a new era. It has led to gradual general public recognition of this kind of education. Further recognition of this mode occurred in 1982 when the International Council for Correspondence Education

(ICCE) changed its name into the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) (Holmberg, 1995:3-4).

### 3.2.2 Definitions of distance education

According to Garrison (1989:2), the term 'distance education' grew out of a need for a concept broader than correspondence study that could encompass new communication technology for the delivery of education at a distance. Although the term has become widely accepted, it does have inherent problems as to its exact meaning and scope. Keegan (1986), on analysing a number of similar definitions of distance education, was able to identify six basic elements. Using these elements he was able to derive his 'descriptive' definition consisting of seven elements. The elements are:

1. the quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process; this distinguishes it from conventional face-to-face education.
2. the influence of an educational organisation both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of it from private study and teach-yourself programmes.
3. the use of technical media, print, audio, video or computer, to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course.
4. the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue; this distinguishes it from other uses of technology in education.
5. the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group, throughout the length of the learning process, so that people are usually taught as individuals and not in



groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialisation purposes.

6. the presence of more industrialised features than conventional oral education.
7. the privatisation of institutional learning.

(Keegan, 1986: 49-50)

He posited that his definition takes up the "the middle ground between the extremes of defining distance education so narrowly that it becomes an abstraction which does not correspond to existing reality, or defining distance education so broadly that it becomes meaningless" (Keegan, 1986:50). However, as pointed out by Garrison and Shale's (1989 cited by Garrison, 1989:5), Keegan's definition is surprisingly narrow because of the number of constraining characteristics.

Thus, it is possible to view definitions of distance education from the perspective of them being narrow or broad. Holmberg (1986), Bååth (1984), and Delling (1985 cited by Holmberg, 1986:3) are in favour of broad definitions. Holmberg (1977) defined distance education as:

the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance, and tuition of a tutorial organisation.

(Holmberg, 1987:9).

He described distance education as comprising both one-way traffic and two-way traffic. One-way traffic was described as consisting of printed, broadcast and/or recorded presentations of learning matter. Two-way traffic, which is also known as mediated two-way communication, consists of interactions between students and

their supporting organisation that usually occur in writing, on the telephone or by other media. Face-to-face sessions are considered secondarily and as a supplement in mediated two-way communication (Holmberg, 1986:2). Holmberg is not in favour of definitions that insist on the inclusion of 'mediated two-way communication' to qualify a system as a distance education system. In his opinion, this would mean that most of the activities in Socialist countries in Europe that are described there as distance education would have to be excluded since they rely mainly on face-to-face sessions (Holmberg, 1986:2). Bååth (1984) supported Holmberg's stand of a very wide distance-education concept. He argued that:

distance study programmes vary from almost no tutor-student two-way communication at a distance to a great concern for distance communication and dialogue. They also vary from almost no concern for the teaching functions of the distance learning materials to extremely elaborated study materials, intended to provide all learning support possible within the framework of the study package.

(Bååth, 1984: 70-71)

Delling (1985 cited by Holmberg, 1986: 3) also supported this stand. In his opinion, printed or recorded course transferring learning matter to the student (one-way), combined with any type of two-way communication, evidently also face-to-face, should also be considered to be a distance education course.

Moore (1973), on the other hand, proposed a narrow definition of distance education that directly addresses the issue of mediated communication. According to him:



distance teaching may be defined as the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviours are executed apart from the learning behaviours, including those that in a contagious (direct contact) situation would be performed in the learner's presence, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices

(Moore, 1973:664).

In contrast to Holmberg's definition, which focuses on the 'tutorial organisation', Moore chose to emphasise the transaction between the teacher and the learner.

Garrison (1989) was also in favour of a narrow definition that included mediated learning. In his definition he proposed:

Distance education implies that the majority of educational communication between (among) teacher and student(s) occurs non-contagiously. It must involve two-way communication between (among) teacher and student(s) for the purpose of facilitating and supporting the educational process. It uses technology to mediate the necessary two-way communication.

(Garrison and Shale, 1987: 11)

Like Moore, Garrison (1989) did not support the argument that "in distance education the institution teaches while in traditional education, it is the teacher"(p.7). He claimed that the teacher or tutor supports and facilitates the educational transaction through written comments or perhaps through telephone tutoring, whereas the organisation may make possible important services, such as providing the infrastructure and awarding credit, but it does not teach (Garrison, 1989:7). His view is in contrast to recent views expounded at the 1999 COL (Commonwealth of Learning) conference held in Brunei. The general consensus at the conference was that in the case of open learning or distance education programmes, it is the institution that teaches and not the teacher. Daniel (1999), in his plenary presentation at the conference, explained that in order to produce a successful

distance education system, there must be division of labour where some people develop learning materials, others support students, yet others provide logistics and so on. So, unlike the traditional approach where a teacher takes on the various roles, in this case, it is the institution, working as a team, that teaches (Daniel, 1999:6). I support this view of distance education for I feel that the previous view where the teacher takes centre stage is outdated and not a reflection of successful current distance education practices. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the teaching of English in UKM, the course materials are prepared by a team of staff and not individual teachers. As for the support system, it is provided and monitored by the Pusat Pengajian Luar Kampus (Centre for Off-Campus, Studies). This practice is also evident in the distance learning systems of other universities in Malaysia.

Garrison (1993b:17):extended his definition of distance education by suggesting that mediated two-way communication consists of three generations. The three generations, which he viewed from the perspective of three developmental stages, are 'correspondence', 'teleconferencing' and 'computer-based learning'. He qualified the concept of generation by explaining that, first, it is used to suggest a building upon previous developments and that new and current technologies are hierarchically combined to increase technological capacity and choice in designing effective distance education. Second, there is a clear differentiation between technologies capable of supporting two-way communication and media that only send messages only one way. Finally, he concluded that pure examples of generations are seldom found and what exists currently is a complex mixture of technologies and media that virtually makes it impossible to classify distance methods in terms of one generation or the other. If that is the case why is it necessary to consider the three developmental generations? In my opinion, Garrison's developmental stages represent the 'ideal' development of a distance learning system. However, these stage may not represent 'real-life situations'. For example, UKM distance learning system is in its eight year of operation, and yet it has been in not moved beyond generation one. Plans to incorporate other types of technologies were stated in the Policy but the university was not able to carry them



out due to financial difficulties. Thus, it is evident that the distance learning system adopted by an institution is influenced not only by theoretical considerations, but also practical considerations.

Besides the above mentioned definitions there are many more. Earlier definitions included those by Dohmen (1967), Peters (1973), and Ochoa (1979), whereas more recent ones include those by Barker et al. (1989), and Portway and Lane (1994). Some of them are broader and some narrower in their definitions of the characteristics of distance education. Personally, I am more in favour of a broad definition. I prefer Holmberg's definition, despite Garrison's criticism (1989:3) that it is incomplete for not directly mentioning mediated communication. In my opinion, Holmberg, Delling and Baath, intentionally made their definitions broad to account for the vast spectrum of education practices that come under the label of distance education. Admittedly, a distance education system that precludes mediated communication is 'primitive' and limited in its potential to serve its learners. However, it has to be recognised that many such systems exist in the world today. So, in my view, it would be prudent to say that appropriate mediated communication should be a goal to strive for, but not a criterion to judge whether a system can be called a distance education system or not. For this reason, Holmberg's definition is adopted for this thesis.

### 3.2.3 Theories of distance education

Suave (1993:101) observed that authors in developing their models of distance education have always considered conventional teaching to be the ideal educational relationship between the teacher and the learner and consequently, distance education has been seen as having to recreate this ideal relationship. Since conventional teaching has always been considered as the 'norm' and has a history that dated back to the beginning of civilisation, it is not surprising that it is

considered as the ideal educational relationship. Rumble (1988) described the roots of distance education as being shallow and theories (or rather models) of distance education) as dealing with generalisation drawn from practice rather than research. Theorists (such as Rumble, 1988; Delling, 1966; Wedemeyer, 1981) also acknowledged that so far there has not been any overarching theory or concept of distance education that is truly independent of general educational theories. Theories/models of distance education have been classified in various ways, but the methods of classification are not very different. Generally, it is possible to identify three main categories of theories/models. They are theories of autonomy and independence; theory of industrialisation; and theories of interaction and communications. For the purpose of this thesis, it is not necessary to review these theories/models in depth. Thus, in the next section I will only present a summary of the views of the main theories/models in the three groups to provide an overview of the conceptual bases of distance education. This will be followed by a discussion of the applicability of these theories/models to the UKM context.



Theories/models	Core views of the theories/models
<b>I. Theoretical models of autonomy and independence</b>	<b>Consider student autonomy and independence to be the basis of distance education.</b>
<b>a) Delling's process model (1966)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the teacher and the educational organisation are reduced to the minimum and the whole emphasis is on the autonomy and independence of the learner.</li> <li>• Distance education has little of the characteristics of 'teaching' because there is, in general, no teacher in the system and the functions relating to student learning within the helping organisation, are performed by a variety of machines, people, and materials</li> </ul> <p>(cited by Keegan, 1996:58).</p>
<b>b) Wedemeyer's model (1963, 1973, 1981, 1988)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance education at university level should offer freedom in goal selection and be self-pacing and individualised.</li> <li>• The only way to break 'the space-time barriers' of education is to separate teaching from learning. This involves planning each as a separate activity.</li> <li>• Distance or independent systems that are capable of operation in any place have six characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher and student are separated.</li> <li>2. The normal processes of teaching and learning are carried out in writing or through some other medium.</li> <li>3. Teaching is individualised.</li> <li>4. Learning takes place through the student's activity.</li> <li>5. Learning is made convenient for the student in his own environment.</li> <li>6. The learner takes responsibility for the progress, with freedom to start and stop at any time and to pace himself.</li> </ol> <p>( Wedemeyer, 1981:76)</p> </li> </ul>

<p><b>c) Moore's theory of independent learning and teaching (1972, 1973, 1976, 1983, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993)</b></p>	<p>His theory composed of two dimensions: transactional distance and learner autonomy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactional distance is the physical separation that leads to a psychological and communication gap, a space of potential misunderstanding between inputs of instructor and those of the learner (Moore, 1988: 80).</li> <li>• Transactional distance is a function of two variables, dialogue and structure: Dialogue is two-way communication. It is the extent to which, in any educational programme, the learner, the programme and the educator are able to respond to one another. Structure is a measure of an educational programme's responsiveness to learner's individual needs (Moore 1983:157).</li> <li>• Autonomous learning, is related to transactional distance in that 'the greater the transactional distance, the more autonomy the learner has to exercise' (Moore, 1991:5).</li> <li>• An autonomous learner seeks out a teacher for help in formulating problems and gathering information. He/shewill temporary surrender some autonomy, but a truly autonomous learner will not relinquish overall control of the learning process (cited by Amundsen 1993:63).</li> <li>• Distant teaching programmes, by their structure require more autonomous behaviour from learners, the kinds of people who participate successfully in such programmes will be measurably more autonomous (cited by Amundsen, 1993:64).</li> </ul>
<p><b>d) Garrison's theory of communication and learner control (1989, 1993b)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning process requires interaction with a teacher. Since the teacher and learner are separated, the only way to support an educational transaction is through technology. Technology and distance education are inseparable and the theory and practice of distance education have evolved based on the increasing sophistication of instructional technology (Garrison, 1989: 12).</li> <li>• Learner control is concerned with the opportunity and ability to influence and direct a course of events... control within the educational setting, however, cannot be established by only one party when the direction of the course of events must be inherently collaborative (Garrison, 1989: 27).</li> <li>• Control is based on the interrelationship between independence (as in the self-directed learner), proficiency (as in the ability to learn independently), and support (characterised by the resources available to guide and facilitate the educational transaction). This, in turn, is interpreted within the larger relationship between teacher, learner and content (Garrison, 1989:27).</li> </ul>



<p><i>e) Verduin and Clark (1991)</i></p>	<p>Their framework has three dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first dimension – dialogue/support This support may range from simply providing directions concerning assignments to substantial motivational or emotional support (Verduin &amp; Clark, 1991: 125).</li><li>• The second dimension – structure/ specialised -- takes into consideration flexibility of due dates, student input into course development and so on. Only a minimal structure may be necessary in fields of distance study where competence is a matter of basic understanding of principles or problems. However, a high level of structure may be necessary in fields where many years of study may be necessary before a learner is competent enough to set objectives and study methods or to take part in evaluation (Verduin and Clark, 1991:125).</li><li>• The third dimension – general competence/self-directedness A better approach to deciding levels of self-directedness or autonomy may be to determine whether the student is competent in the field at that level, to estimate the student's general competence, and to see if appropriate structure and dialogue have been given after taking into consideration the formality or lack of it in that field (Verduin and Clark, 1991:127).</li></ul>
---	--

<b>II Theory of industrialisation</b> <b>Peters (1993, 1994, 1988, 1998)</b>	<p>This is not a theory/model in the conventional sense of the word. It is rather an attempt by Peters to draw a comparison between the industrial production process and the teaching-learning process. From the comparison he drew the following conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure of distance teaching is determined to a considerable degree by the principles of industrialisation, in particular by those of rationalisation, division of labour and mass production.</li> <li>• The teaching process is gradually restructured through increasing mechanisation and automation.</li> <li>• Distance teaching involves the extensive use of technology which facilitates the reproduction of objective teaching activity to any number and allows a large number of students to participate in university and study simultaneously, regardless of their own place of residence and occupation.</li> <li>• Distance teaching involves the application of organisation principles and concentration of the available resources to improve efficiency and reduce cost.</li> <li>• Distance teaching involves the testing of the teaching packages and monitoring of the teaching system to maintain quality and standard.</li> </ul> <p>(Peters, 1988:110-111 and cited by Mohammad, 1999:65-66)</p>
<b>III Theories of Interaction and communication</b>	<b>consider interaction and communication as central to any concept of distance education.</b>
<b>a) Holmberg (1986, 1988, 1995, 1997)</b>	<p>Important notions in his theory are the notions of non-contagious communication, emotional involvement and self study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Non-contagious communication' describes the communication which takes place when a learner and an instructor/institution are separated in time and space.</li> <li>• The characteristic of a good distance education resembles that of a guided conversation aiming at learning and that the presence of the typical traits of such a conversation facilitates learning. The distance-study course and the non-contagious communication which is typical of distance education are instruments of a conversation-like interaction between the student and the supporting organisation (authors, tutors, counsellor).</li> </ul> <p>(Holmberg, 1988: 115).</p>



<p><b>b) John Bååth (1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1988)</b></p>	<p>In this research, he examines the applicability of teaching models of Skinner, Rothkopf, Ausubel, Egan, Bruner, Rogers, and Gagne to correspondence education (which he regards as a subset of distance education) and is able to show the functions of two-way communication in the light of each of the teaching models (Bååth, 1980: 12).</p> <p>The conclusions he drew from his investigations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All models were found applicable in varying degrees to pure correspondence teaching.</li> <li>• Models with strict control towards fixed goals also imply a greater emphasis on the teaching material than on two-way communication when applied to correspondence teaching (Bååth, 1980:12).</li> </ul> <p>A more significant part of his contribution to distance education is his conception of the two-way communication between the student and the tutor/institution as central of the distance education process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tutor can have important pedagogical functions, not only that of correcting errors and assessing students' papers. He/she may play a principal part in the linking of learning materials to learning – by trying to relate the learning material to each student's previous reinforcement patterns (Skinner), or to his/her mathemagenic activities (Rothkopf), or to his previous knowledge and cognitive structure (Ausubel), or to his previous comprehension of the basic concepts and principles of the curriculum (Bruner), or by concentrating on the task of establishing a good personal relationship with the learner (Rogers)</li> </ul> <p>(Bååth, 1980:121).</p>
--	---

<p><b>c) Daniel 's model (1979, 1999)</b></p>	<p>John Daniel sees distance systems as comprising two groups of activities: the first, in which students work alone and the second in which they are brought into contact with people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first group includes activities such as reading a text, watching television at home and writing an assignment and these are called independent activities.</li> <li>• The second includes activities like discussion on telephone, group discussion and marking and commenting on assignments and these are called interactive activities.</li> <li>• Independent activities have great possibilities for economies of scales since the marginal costs of printing extra copies of texts or broadcasting to more students are low. However, the cost of interactive activities tends to increase in direct proportion to the number of students. Thus, in any distance system it is crucial to maintain a balance between the two, that is a balance between independence and interaction</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(Daniel &amp; Marquis, 1979:32).</p> <p>His view on independence and interaction extends to designing of courses and pacing of students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses should not be entirely independent. They should incorporate socialisation and feedback as students want to know how they are performing in relation to their peers and about the criteria of mastery set by the course authors. Distance systems can either give students the dignity of succeeding by pacing them or the freedom to proceed towards failure without pacing</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(Daniel &amp; Shale, 1979, cited by Keegan, 1996: 99).</p>
<p><b>d) Sewart's model (1980, 1981, 1987)</b></p>	<p>Sewart is unhappy with the notion that a package of teaching materials can perform all the functions of a teacher in a face-to-face education system and advocates the introduction of the human element to adapt a distance system to individual needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main function of the intermediary, which normally comes in the form of the tutor, is to bridge the gap between the individual and the institution by adapting a distance system to individual needs (Sewart, 1987: 159).</li> </ul>



<p><b>e) Sheath's (1956-72) and Smith's model (1973-84)</b>  <b>Sheath (1965, 1973);</b>  <b>Smith (1979, 1988)</b></p>	<p>Their system integrates external and internal teaching by the full-time faculty of the university.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distance education system should provide a core of independent learning materials supported by compulsory provision for staff/student contacts and regular student group activity. This is the best compromise to overcome the educational dilemma of providing independent learning situation for motivated mature-age student who need minimum assistance and fulfilling the institution's role as a responsible academic institution.</li> <li>The work of the university faculty should be divided equally between on-campus and off-campus students. In the case of the distance education students, the lecturers should perform all those functions they do for normal students and more (Smith, 1988: 199-202).</li> </ul>
<p><b>f) Keegan's model (1986, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 1996)</b></p>	<p>Keegan believes that a theoretical justification to distance education can be found in the attempt to reintegrate the teaching and learning acts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The intersubjectivity of teacher and learner, in which learning occurs, has to be artificially recreated. The linking of learning materials to learning is central to this process. It is necessary to recreate the link between teaching and learning through interpersonal communication which is deliberately planned.</li> <li>The functions of interpersonal communication in distance education can be replaced by printed, electronic, or computer-based interaction.</li> <li>The more successful the distance education programme manages reintegration, the lower the drop-out rate, the higher the quality of learning, and the higher the status of the institution</li> </ul> <p>(Keegan, 1996: 116-117).</p>

### 3.2.4 Applicability of the theories of distance education to the UKM context

In this section I am going to discuss the applicability of the theories/models of each group to the UKM context, and the extent these theories/models are reflected in UKM distance education practices. Reference will be made to practices relating to the teaching and learning of English, where appropriate.

The focus of the **theories/models of autonomy and independence** is the separation of the teacher and the student. Moore (1991) described this as 'transactional distance'. He posited that "the greater the transactional distance, the more autonomy the learner has to exercise" (p.5). Autonomy includes the freedom to select one's own goals and the opportunity to be "self-pacing and individualised in learning" (Wedemeyer, 1981:76). Moore (1991) believed that the distance learner should be given the opportunity to seek help from the teacher in formulating problems and gathering goals, but he stressed "a truly autonomous learner will not relinquish overall control of the learning process" (cited by Admundsen, 1993:63). Delling (1966 cited by Keegan, 1996:58) suggested that the teacher does not exist in the system and support for the students is performed by machines, people, and materials. However, Moore (1991) and Verduin and Clark (1991) adopted a more flexible approach where 'dialogue' ranges from providing directions concerning assignments to substantial motivational or emotional support, and 'structure' ranges from minimal to high level. 'Dialogue' is the term used to describe the extent in which the learner, the programme and the educator are able to respond to one another and 'structure' is a measure of an educational programme's responsiveness to learner's individual needs (Moore, 1983:157). Garrison (1989) was more rigid in suggesting that "the only way to support an educational transaction is through technology" (p.12).



How applicable are theories of autonomy and independence to the UKM context? In my opinion, autonomy and independence are crucial in any distance learning context. In order to be effective learners, it is important for distance learners to be 'self-pacing' and 'individualised' in their learning. They should also be given the opportunity to decide on their own goals. However, as far as UKM is concerned, I do not see any serious efforts in promoting autonomy among the distance learners. In the context of learning English, distance learners are not given any 'training' on how to learn on their own. The courses are predetermined and syllabus set by the EPD department. Projects, assignments and mode of assessment are all decided by the various courses. In addition, students are not even informed of the English Language Resource centre. Thus, it is obvious that serious efforts have to be taken to promote autonomy among the distance learners.

Peter's **theory/model of industrialisation** (1988:110-111) is an attempt to draw a comparison between the industrial production process and the teaching-learning process. According to this theory/model, the structure of distance teaching is determined to a considerable degree by the principle of industrialisation, in particular by those of rationalisation, division of labour and mass production. Distance teaching involves the extensive use of technology and the teaching process is gradually restructured through increasing mechanisation and automation. The application of organisation principles, the concentration of the available resources, and the testing of the teaching packages and monitoring of the teaching system are also part of distance teaching.

Peters' model accounted for only the physical aspects of distance education which are evident in most existing distance education systems. The UKM system, as discussed in Chapter 2, adopts a system which manifest many of the characteristics described by Peters. However, his model is limited in the sense that it does not consider the needs and experiences of the learners. Thus, the applicability of Peters' model is very limited.

**Theories of interaction and communication** consider interaction and communication as central to any concept of distance education. Holmberg (1988:115) proposed that distance-study courses and the 'non-contagious communication' (i.e., communication between a distance learner and instructor/institution) should resemble that of a guided conversation. Baath (1980:121) suggested that the role of a tutor should extend beyond that of just correcting errors and assessing students' papers. For example, the teacher should make an attempt to link learning materials to learners' previous experiences/knowledge/cognitive structures etc. Daniel and Marquis (1979:32) perceived distance learning systems as comprising two groups of activities: students working alone and students brought into contact with people. The second group includes interactive activities such as discussion on telephone, group discussion, and marking and commenting on assignments. They believed that it is important to maintain a balance between the two groups of activities. Sewart (1987:159) advocated the introduction of the human element (which normally comes in the form of a tutor) to adapt a distance system to individual needs. Smith (1988:199-202) proposed a system that integrates external and internal teaching by the full-time faculty of the university. This system is to provide a core of independent learning materials supported by compulsory provision for staff/student contacts and regular student group activity.

Some of the ideas from the theories/models of interaction and communication have been adopted by UKM. The provision of face-to face tutorials is a clear example of this. The integrated system utilised by UKM which is based on Smith's model (1983) is another example. In the teaching of English, attempts have been made to instil elements of 'conversation-like interaction' (Holmberg, 1988:115) in the course materials (i.e., in the study guides).



The conclusion that we can draw from this discussion is that UKM distance learning system is more interactive than autonomous in nature. In my opinion, there is a need to move to a more autonomous and technologically advanced system. However, before that could be done there is a need to prepare the learners for the change. This can only be undertaken if research is carried out to find out more about the needs of the learners and types of preparations they require. The present thesis represents a research in that direction and the findings will shed more light on the types of preparations required.

I have already mentioned in Chapter 2 that the same system is used by UKM in the teaching of content courses and language courses in the distance learning context. Is this theoretically sound? Sussex (1991) (as mentioned earlier) has pointed out that "languages are more difficult than most subjects to learn in the distance learning mode because of the complex combination of skills and information required for mastery" (p.189). This is also the opinion of many others engaged in the teaching of Second/Foreign Language. Thus, is it advisable for UKM to continue using the same system to teach content and language courses? This question will be considered in the next section when I discuss the applicability of language learning theories (that are relevant to L2) to the distance learning context.

### **3.3 Theories of first and second language learning**

In this section, I will first begin by reviewing theories on how languages are learned and the relevance of these theories to L2. Since this is a complex area, and theories abound, I will limit the review to more major current language learning theories by first, focusing briefly on a historical perspective, and then on theoretical bases more relevant to my research. The extent these theories are applicable and reflected in

UKM distance English Proficiency programme will be included in the discussion. Finally, I will explain what led to my decision to adopt a constructivist construct for this thesis.

### 3.3.1 The behaviourist approach to learning

This approach was very influential in the 1940s and 1950s especially in the United States. Behaviourists, such as Skinner (1957), believed that language learning was the result of imitation, practice, reinforcement (or feedback on success) and habit formation. They posited that all learning, whether verbal or non-verbal, took place through the same underlying processes. Since they viewed language development as a formation of habits, they further assumed that a person learning a second language started off with the habits formed from the first language and that these habits interfered with the new ones needed for the second language (Lado, 1964).

Behaviourism was often linked to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) which was developed by structural linguists in Europe and North America. This hypothesis predicted that learners would acquire target structures easily if there were similarities between the first and the target language, but would find difficult in acquiring the structures if there were differences. Researchers found that a learner's first language did influence his/her acquisition of a second language. Learners made some, but not all the errors predicted by the CAH. Besides, many of the errors made were not predictable on the basis of the CAH. This seemed to suggest that "the influence of the learner's first language may not simply be a matter of the transfer of habits, but a more subtle and complex process of identifying points of similarities, weighing the evidence in support of a particular feature and even reflecting (though not necessary consciously) about whether a certain feature seems to 'belong' in the structure of the target language" (Lightbown and Spada, 1999:36).



However, the notion of L1 interference was not rejected entirely. Selinker (1972) was the first to use the term 'interlanguage' to refer to the systematic knowledge of a second language which is independent of both the learner's first language and the target language (Ellis, 1985:47). This will be discussed in Section 3.3.2.2 as this theory has its background in mentalist views of language which emphasise the learner's innate mental capacities for acquiring a language, and minimise the contribution of the linguistic environment.

### **3.3.2 Innative approaches to learning**

#### **3.3.2.1 The Universal Grammar model**

Supporters of innatism believed in the innate ability of a person to acquire a language. As Chomsky (1959) posited that children were biologically programmed for language and language developed in the child just the same way that other biological functions developed. He further proposed that the environment provided, available people to speak to the child and the child's biological endowment would do the rest. This theory was put forward by Chomsky in reaction to the inadequacy of the behaviourist theory. Chomsky believed that children were born with a special ability to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system. He originally referred to this special ability as a language acquisition device (LAD). According to him, when a child accessed samples of a natural language, the LAD would be triggered to allow the child to discover the structure of the language to be learned by matching the innate knowledge of basic grammatical relationships to the structures of the particular language in the environment. The child's innate endowment was referred to as Universal Grammar. He further proposed that the LAD would not be present in adult learners.

Generally, attempts in pursuit of substantive universals of language have been frustrating except for some rays of hope in research by such people as Slobin (1986), Bickerton (1981) and Greenberg (1963, 1966). Regarding second language acquisition, Chomsky has not made any claims regarding the applicability of his theory to this field. However, there are some who believe that Universal Grammar has an important explanatory role in second language acquisition. Nevertheless, there is no general consensus on how Universal Grammar works in second language development (Brown, 1987: 28-29 and Lightbown and Spada, 1999: 36-37).

### 3.3.2.2 Interlanguage

As mentioned earlier Selinker coined the term 'interlanguage'. Various alternative terms have also been used by researchers, such as Nemser (1971) who used the term 'approximative systems', and Corder (1971) who coined the terms 'idiosyncratic dialects' and 'transitional competence'. According to Ellis (1985:47&299), these terms have acquired different but related meanings: (1) to refer to the "structured system which the learner constructs at any given stage in his/her development" (i.e., an interlanguage), (2) to refer to "the series of interlocking systems which form what is called the learner's 'built-in syllabus' (i.e., the interlanguage continuum)", and (3) to refer to particular mother tongue/English target language combinations (e.g., French mother tongue/English target language vs. German mother tongue/English target language).

Selinker (1972) further suggested the presence of five principle processes operating in interlanguage. He named them as (1) language transfer (2) overgeneralisation of target language rules (3) transfer of training (i.e., a rule entered the learner's system as a result of instruction) (4) strategies of L2 learning (i.e. "an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned" and (5) strategies of L2 communication (i.e., "an identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native



speakers") (p.37). He further proposed that the five processes together constituted the ways in which the learner tried to reduce the learning burden to manageable proportions. Selinker also noted that many L2 learners failed to reach target language competence, i.e., they were not able to reach the end of the interlanguage continuum. This he referred to as 'fossilisation'.

There is however one aspect of interlanguage that does not follow mentalist principles. Chomsky and other mentalists believed that L1 acquisition in a child was determined by the child's 'acquisition device' which changed with age to the extent that automatic, genetically-endowed language acquisition would not be possible after puberty. If this principle is true then the question for second language acquisition is "how do adults succeed in learning a second language at all if recourse to the 'acquisition device' is not possible? Selinker (1972) proposed that adults who successfully achieved native-speaker proficiency in the target language were able to do so because they continued to make use of the 'acquisition device' or, in other words, succeeded in reactivating the 'latent language structure'. This process would transform the Universal Grammar into the structure of the grammar of the target language. In the case of adult second language learners that 'fossilised', he proposed that these learners fell back on a more general cognitive mechanism that did not involve recourse to Universal Grammar. He labelled this as 'latent psychological structure' (Ellis, 1985:49).

Mclaughlin (1987) pointed out that the interlanguage theory is an intermediate-level theory concerned with describing a limited range of second- language phenomena which include "the question of systematicity and variability in the performance of language learners, the question of how the emerging system develops and the role of transfer from the first language in this process" (p. 80). In contrast to Krashen's theory (which will be discussed next), it had minor impact on pedagogy. This may be partially due to the fact that researchers into this theory generally are not concerned with pedagogical issues. In view of the lack of impact of both Universal Grammar

and interlanguage, both theoretically and pedagogically, on second language learning, these theories will not be considered in my discussion of language learning theories of relevance to this research in Section 3.3.6.

### 3.3.2.3 Krashen's 'monitor' model

Krashen's innatist theory (1982) of second language acquisition is very popular with classroom practitioners. This may be because it appears to have immediate implications to classroom practices. Five 'hypotheses' constitute what was originally called the 'monitor model'. The hypotheses are: (1) the acquisition-learning hypothesis (2) the monitor hypothesis (3) the natural order hypothesis; (4) the input hypothesis and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. A description of the hypotheses follows:

Hypothesis 1: Krashen (1985) made a distinction between 'acquisition' and 'learning'. He described 'acquisition' as "a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilise in acquiring their first language" and learning as a "conscious process that result in 'knowing about' language" (p.1). In his opinion acquisition is more important as it is readily available for natural, fluent communication.

Hypothesis 2: He proposed that acquisition 'initiates' the speaker's utterances and is responsible for fluency "whereas learning has only one function, and that is as a monitor or editor" and that learning comes into play only "to make changes in the form of utterances", after it has been "produced by the acquired system" (Krashen, 1982:15).



- Hypothesis 3: He maintained that second language learners seem to acquire some rules much earlier than others and there seems to be "predictable stages of acquisition" (Krashen, 1985:1).
- Hypothesis 4: He postulated that humans acquired language in only one way – by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input'. He proposed, "We move from  $I$ , our current level, to  $i + I$ , the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing  $i + I$ ." (Krashen, 1985:2).
- Hypothesis 5: Krashen described the 'affective filter' as 'a mental block' which prevents learners from acquiring language from the available input (Krashen, 1982:32). He further explained that if the filter is 'down', the input reaches the LAD and becomes acquired competence and vice versa. 'Affect' in this context refers to such things as motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states.

Krashen's hypothesis has been very influential in supporting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), particularly in North America (Lightbown and Spada, 1999: 40). On the other hand, it has been seriously criticised (e.g., by McLaughlin, 1987) for failing to propose hypotheses that can be tested by empirical research. It is also immensely popular with second language practitioners and in view of that its relevance to this research will be discussed in Section 3.3.6.

### 3.3.3 Cognitive approaches to learning

These approaches can be viewed as a reaction against the behaviourist approach to learning. They subscribe to the Gestalt psychology's principle that "does not regard

repetition or practice, the mechanical 'stamping in' or Thorndike's laws of learning, or Skinner's 'shaping', as characteristics of human learning " (Stern, 1983:307). Instead, it is more concerned with the mental processes involved in learning, which include "how people build up and draw upon memories and the way in which they become involved in the process of learning" (Williams and Burden, 1997:13). However, the ways in which human thought have been investigated varied considerably. According to William and Burden (1997), at one extreme are the information processing theorists who "have drawn the analogy of the brain as a highly complex computer and seek to explain its working in terms of rules and models of how different aspects of learning take place" (p.13) and at the other extreme is the constructivist movement which emphasises the ways in which individuals seek to make their own sense of the world and the experiences that surround them. Shuell (1987) suggested that cognitive constructivist psychology influences learning in the following ways:

- (1) "Learning is an active constructive and goal oriented process that is dependent upon the mental activities of the learner". What is important are the mental activities that may lead to behavioural change or response;
- (2) the existence of metacognitive or higher-level learning processes such as regulation of learning activities and strategies for enhancing learning;
- (3) the explicit recognition that learning is influenced by prior knowledge;
- (4) knowledge is represented by complex structures and the concern is how the learner extracts meaning; and finally,
- (5) "concern for analysing learning tasks and performance in terms of the cognitive processes that are involved".

(Shuell, 1987:415)

Notable proponents of 'constructivism' include Piaget (e.g.1966; 1972; 1974), Kelly (1955) and Bruner (1960, 1966). In the next section, I will discuss the relevance of



the information processing model, and Piaget's theory of cognitive development (one of the most well-known cognitive constructivist learning theories) to second language teaching and learning.

### 3.3.3.1 The information processing model

Cognitive psychologists working on this model tend to see second language learning acquisition as "the building up of knowledge systems that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding" (Lightbown and Spada, 1999: 41). The initial stages of learning involve the slow development of skills but gradually, through experience and practice, certain aspects of performance become automatic (McLaughlin, 1987: 139). McLaughlin felt that this model does not represent a highly articulated theoretical position as far as second language learning is concerned. He pointed out that, although there are attempts to build up a picture of more complex phenomena out of specific research findings, this is not possible because the range of phenomena the theories accommodate is relatively small. He described this model as being "more 'micro' theoretical enterprise than Interlanguage theory, Universal Grammar theory, or Acculturation/ Pidginisation theory (McLaughlin, 1987:151). However, he acknowledged that understanding the learning process from the information processing perspective has important implications for second language teaching.

### 3.3.3.2 Piaget's theory of cognitive development

**Piaget** (1966) proposed that learners pass through a series of stages (see Fig. 3.1).

Period	Age (in years)	Characteristics
Sensori-motor	0-2	Infant learns to differentiate between self and objects in the external world
Pre-operational thought	2-4	Child ego-centric but classifies objects by single salient features
Intuitive	4-7	Child thinks in classificatory way but may be unaware of classifications
Concrete operations	7-11	Child able to use logical operations such as reversibility, classification and serialisation
Formal operations	11-15	Trial steps towards abstract conceptualisation occur

Fig. 3.1 Piaget's stages of cognitive development (cited by Jarvis et al, 1998:31)

Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposes that humans cannot be 'given' information which they immediately understand and use. Instead, human must 'construct' their own knowledge. They build their knowledge through experience which enable them to create schemas i.e., mental blocks in their heads. These schemas are changed, enlarged, and made more sophisticated through two complimentary processes: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process by which incoming information is changed or modified in our minds so that we can fit in with what we already know. Accommodation, on the other hand, is the process by which we modify what we already know to take into account new information. Piaget's theory has significant implications for language teaching. However, it is more relevant to children than to adults. The following implications for language teachers are examples of how the theory can be utilised:

1. When learners learn a new language, they are, in these terms, actively involved in making sense of the language input that surrounds them as well as the tasks presented to them. Thus, it is important for teachers to help and encourage



learners in this process, rather than seeing them as passive receivers of the language .

2. The development of thinking and its relationship to language and experience become a central focus of learning. It becomes clear, for example, that language teaching based mainly on memorisation will not lead to deeper understanding.
3. Care should be taken to match the requirements of any task to the cognitive level of which the learner is capable.
4. Piaget's notions of assimilation and accommodation can be applied to learning a new language.

(William and Burden, 1997:22)

### 3.3.4 Humanistic approaches to learning

These approaches are based on the constructivist view of learning which " believes in the centrality of learners constructing their own knowledge and understanding" (William and Burden, 1997:30). However, it adds another dimension by emphasising the development of the whole person rather than focusing solely upon the development and employment of cognitive skills. It also emphasises the importance of the inner world of the learner and places the individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions at the forefront of all human development (William and Burden, 1997:30). Some notable exponents of this approach include Erikson (1963), Maslow (1968, 1970) and Rogers (1969).

Hamachek (1977) suggested some useful examples of the kind of educational implications that follow from taking this approach. They are:

1. Learning should be seen within the context of helping learners develop a sense of personal identity and relating to realistic future goals.

2. In order to be self-actualising, learners should be helped and encouraged to make choices in what and how they learn.
3. It is important for teacher to empathise with the learners by getting to know them as individuals and seeking to understand the ways in which they make sense of the world, rather than always seeking to impose their own viewpoints.

(Hamachek, 1977: 149)

Rogers (1982) also has a number of helpful suggestions to make about the implications of taking such an approach. These include providing optimum conditions for individualised and group learning of an authentic nature to take place, and the fostering of a sense of freedom and counterbalancing sense of responsibility.

Humanistic approaches have also considerable influence on English Language Teaching (ELT). A number of different language teaching methodologies have emerged from adopting a humanistic approach, the main ones being 'The Silent Way', 'Suggestopaedia' and 'Community Language Learning.' (See Richards and Rodgers, 1986, and Stevick, 1980 for summaries of these approaches)

### 3.3.5 The social interactive approach to learning

This approach is also based on a constructive view of learning. However, it differs from the cognitive approach in that the constructivist viewpoint is seen as operating within a social interactionist framework, i.e., learning is seen as occurring through social interactions within a social environment. William and Burden (1997) put forth the view that this approach "encompasses the insights provided by cognitive and humanistic perspectives" (p. 39). Two well-known psychologists of this school of thought are the Russian, Vygotsky and the Israeli, Feuerstein. In this section I will



consider the main ideas of Vygotsky and the application of his view to language teaching to give a better insight into the social interactive approach.

There is a great deal of overlap between Piaget's cognitive 'constructivism' and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978). The difference is that, Vygotsky emphasised on the importance of the social context for cognitive development and supported a discovery model of learning. His model places the teacher in an active role while the students' mental abilities develop naturally through various paths of discovery.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that there are two developmental levels in learning capabilities: the actual development level and the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). The actual development level is the level of the child's mental functions as a result of development cycles which have already been completed. For Vygotsky, mental age equates to the actual level of development. However, he thought that what children do with the assistance of others might even be a better indication of their mental development than what they achieve by themselves. This led him to posit a 'zone of proximal development'. This, he defined as:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under guidance in collaboration with more capable peers.

(Vygotsky: 1978:86)

Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' is his most widely-known concept and has important implications for teachers with regard to what they can do to help children in their learning. This theory suggests that a learner working together with another person, either an adult or a more competent peer at a level that is just above his/her present capabilities is the best way for him/her to move into the next layer

(Vygotsky, 1978:40). This also means that teacher should set tasks that are at a level just beyond that at which the learners are currently capable of functioning and teach principles that will enable them to make the next step unassisted (Vygotsky, 1978:66).

### 3.3.6 Applicability of language learning theories to the distance learning context

In this section I am going to discuss applicability of language learning theories to the distance learning context. However, I will only consider theories/approaches of language learning that have high relevance to my research. First I will discuss a theory on second language learning that is very popular with second language practitioners, i.e., Krashen's Monitor Model. Then I will discuss language learning approaches that are based on 'constructivism'. These will include Cognitive Constructivist Approaches, Humanistic Approaches, and the Social Interactive Approach to language learning. The focus of this discussion is the extent these theories/approaches are reflected in UKM distance English Proficiency Programme.

In his model, **Krashen** (1982) proposed that learning is a 'monitor' or 'editor'. It is not responsible for initiating the speaker's utterance nor for fluency, and can only make changes to utterances by a filtering process. The affective filter is present as a 'mental block' and if it is very high, it will prevent the input from reaching the LAD. He further posited that we can understand input by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensive input' i.e. input that is one level higher than our current level ( $i + 1$ ). If we apply Krashen theory to distance learning, it will mean that it is essential to ensure that comprehensible L2 input is provided by the second language courses and that students are able to receive the input. Since input can only be received if 'affective filter' is low, this mean that it is important to find means to



lower the affective filter, which include lowering anxiety, work pressure, and increasing motivation and interest

Can all these be done in a distance learning context? In the case of UKM, the students taking EPCs are placed into categories according to their English proficiency levels. The courses provided are tailored according to proficiency levels. Thus, it is evident that attempts have been made to ensure that materials provided are of comprehensible level. Efforts have also been carried out to stimulate the interest of students towards the EPCs by providing interactive Study Guides, supplementary materials and audio-visual aids. However, I believe more efforts should be undertaken in this direction. If we were to accept Krashen's hypothesis, it would appear that it is possible to learn a language through the distance learning mode provided sufficient attention has been given to tailor the courses to the distance learning context.

**Cognitive Constructive Approaches, Humanistic Approaches and Social-Interactive Approach to language learning** are all based on 'constructivism'. The central idea of 'constructivism' is that human learning is constructed and learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. Cognitive constructivist learning theory is concerned with meaningful learning. The learner takes responsibility to construct meaning actively, not in isolation, but through dialogue with oneself as well as others. Learners must be actively engaged in integrating information into existing knowledge structures. Since the new knowledge structures can only be created by the learners, the role of the teacher is to monitor continually the learner's cognitive processes and challenge or question inappropriate or unclear perspectives. This learning process requires continual mediation by a teacher to ensure worthwhile outcome in the form of flexible, durable, transferable, and self-regulated knowledge (DiVesta and Riebbber, 1987). The humanistic approach is also concerned with the learner and how he /she make sense of the world around him/her. However, it goes beyond that in considering his/her feelings and

emotions and personal development. As for the social interactive approach, it encompasses the insights provided by the cognitive and humanistics perspectives. Learning is seen as occurring through social interactions within a social environment.

What are the implications of these theories/approaches to the learning English as L2 in a distance learning context? According to the cognitive constructivist approach the teacher has an important role to play. It is through the on-going interaction between the teacher and students that meaningful, valid and increasing complex knowledge structures are produced. It is also the function of the teacher to encourage learners to view society from a broad but critical perspective. "Teacher is an integral component of the educational transaction – not simply an optional resource or marker (Garrison, 1993a:203).

If that is the case how do we justify a distance education system where learners are learning a language on his/her own with minimal or no direct face-to-face contact with the teacher? I believe such a system is viable if the teacher and the learners understand their roles. In this context the teacher has to be the facilitator of learning. He/she must undertake the responsibility of not only structuring content that provides a framework to enable learners to connect and make sense of facts, but must also relate new knowledge structures to those already possess by students. This can be explained by Vygotsky's ZPD. As specified by the concept, the tasks should be of the level just beyond that at which the learners are capable of functioning so that learners can learn them unassisted. Thus in order to create a successful distance learning situation according to the cognitive constructivist approach, it is important for the teacher to organise the course and its content in a way consistent with what he/she believes about how learning should take place. In addition, he/she "must help students learn how to learn content, a step in sophistication above the mere learning of content itself" (Svincki, 1991:29). If we take into consideration the humanistic components, then we should consider learners' thoughts, feelings and emotions. In a



distance learning context this will include providing opportunities for learners to develop a sense of personal identity, to make a choice of deciding what and how they want to learn, and to express their personal views. If we consider the social interactive components as well, this will mean that the learning should occur in meaningful context and not be separated from learning and knowledge, developed in the 'real world'. There must be opportunities for learners to interact socially. Task-based activities should also be encouraged. In the distance learning context, this will come in the form of learning materials that are interactive in nature and interactive group activities or projects out of class involving real-life situations. Glasersfeld (1987) recommended problem-solving activities that are both educational and fun. Telecommunication tools, such as e-mail and the internet, can provide dialogues, discussions, and debates that lead to social construction of meaning. They can also provide students access to many types of information resources that help them understand both their culture and the culture of others. As for the learner, he/she must be willing to take responsibility to construct meanings from the materials provided by the teacher and not simply extract answers for prescribed questions. He/she should learn to be self-directed and self-motivated, and to set and achieve his/her personal learning goals. He/she should also be willing to participate actively in the activities organised to promote learning in meaningful context.

Are all these components in the distance learning English Proficiency Programme of UKM? To a certain extent the materials are interactive but the degree of interactiveness is still way below the desirable level. Although the materials are provided with the level of proficiency of the learners in mind, however there are no attempts to measure the appropriacy of the materials to the designated student population. As far as taking into consideration the humanistic components no efforts have been undertaken in this direction, for example, students are not given any choices in materials and courses. In addition, no consideration has been given to training the learners on how to learn. As far as learning in a meaningful context there is limited attempts to promote such activities. The only activities that vaguely resemble that are projects and some group activities. Thus, from this discussion it is

clearly evident that not much consideration have been given to the psychological needs of the learners in the designing of the English Proficiency Courses by UKM. In view of that, I feel there is a serious need to consider this and that leads me to adopt a constructivist approach to this thesis as I feel there is a definite need to view the courses from this perspective.

This discussion indicates that it is not inappropriate to use the same system to teach content and language courses provided that variations within the system is allowed. The type of variations that are required would become evident from the analysis of the findings of this thesis.

As discussed above it is essential for distance learners to be self-directed. Under what conditions can learners be self-directed and what constitutes self-directed learning? These will be some of the issues that would be discussed in the next section when I review some prominent theories on adult learning.

### **3.4 Adult learning and the adult learner**

Jarvis (1995:22) pointed out that the definition of the term 'adult' is deceptively difficult. He suggested the employment of the term 'post compulsory education' to describe 'adult education', but admitted that the term does not convey the same wealth of meanings. Knowles (1980) described 'adulthood' as referring "to the fact that both individuals' own awareness of themselves and other people's perceptions of them accord them with the status of adulthood within their own society" (cited by Jarvis:1995:22). In my opinion, the term used by Jarvis is too broad. If it is used for this thesis it will mean that university education (both on-campus and distance learning) will be classified as adult education. Knowles's definition, on the other



hand, is too restrictive as it imposes conditions that are difficult to measure. For the purpose of this thesis, all learners above the age of 18 who are studying at a distance and working at the same time are considered as adult learners, thus, confining the term 'adult learners' to distance learners.

### 3.4.1 Adult learning theories

According to Knowles (1989), it is possible to discern two streams of inquiry on Adult Education. One stream could be referred to as 'the scientific stream' and the other, 'the artistic stream'. The scientific stream seeks to discover knowledge through rigorous (and often experimental) investigation, whereas the artistic stream seeks to discover new knowledge through intuition and the analysis of experience. Since this thesis operates within a constructivist framework, it is fitting to consider only theories from the artistic stream. In this section, I will consider the views of some prominent writers who have made significant contribution to the theoretical knowledge of adult learning. The theories reviewed are all concerned with self-directed learning, an important component of distance learning, and, thus, of great relevance to this thesis.

Rogers (1969) is a humanistic psychologist who has expounded his psychological approach in the field of education. As already mentioned, in his theory he emphasised the self-actualisation of the learner and he further argued that the goal of education is 'a fully functioning person' (Rogers, 1969:279-297). Srinivasan (1997:72-74) proposed that Rogers's theory involves the fusing of two distinct activities, i.e., self-actualising and problem-centred education. He argued that a curriculum reflecting this distinction would have to fuse emotional and intellectual activities, such as fusing support in active learning with prepared learning units; a variety of audio visual with standard printing materials and group discussion; the group's spontaneity with a programmed learning text etc. Jarvis (1995:98) argued

that Rogers would not draw the distinction in quite the same way as Srinivasan. This is evident in Rogers' conceptualisation of 'student-centred teaching' which proposes the following five basic hypotheses:

1. We cannot teach another person directly; we can only facilitate his/her learning .
2. A person learns significantly only those things which he/she perceives as being involved in the maintenance of, or enhancement of, the structure of self.
3. Experience which, if assimilated, would involve a change in the organisation of self tends to be resisted through denial or distortion of symbolisation.
4. The structure and organisation of self appear to become more rigid under threat; to relax its boundaries completely from threat, experience which is perceived as inconsistent with the self can only be assimilated if the current organisation of self is relaxed and expanded to include it.
5. The educational situation which most effectively promotes significant learning is one in which (a) threat to the self of the learner is reduced to a minimum, and (b) differentiated perception of the field is facilitated.

(Rogers, 1951 cited in Knowles, 1989:41)

It can be seen from these hypotheses that Rogers perceived learning as being experiential, i.e., involving personal involvement. He viewed the role of the teacher as that of a facilitator. It is obvious here that Rogers comes close to Knowles and Mezirow in his emphasis "upon the self and the need for self-development and self-direction" (Jarvis, 1995:98).

Houle (1961) is one of the most influential North American scholars concerned with self-directed learning. His study was designed to discover primarily why adults engaged in continuing education, but it also shed some light on how they learned. Through an analysis of the characteristics revealed in the interviews, he discovered three main categories of adult learners:



1. The goal-oriented learners, who use education for accomplishing fairly clear-cut objectives. These individuals undertake activities involving learning whenever the need or interest arose.
2. The activity-oriented learners, who participate in education for social contact. Hence, they select activities that allowed social interaction and development of human relationships whenever they feel there is a need.
3. The learning-oriented, who seek knowledge for its own sake. Learning is part and parcel of these individuals' lives.

(Houle, 1961:15-16)

He further analysed what independent study meant and the orientations and strategies of learners who adopted this mode of learning. He came to the conclusion that:

An independent study situation is, in the deepest sense, a co-operative art in which learning must be gained at every point by the distinctive individualism of the learner. He must design and conduct his programme with the realisation that it is based on his own uniqueness, that it has meaning only as it changes him, and that at every point he must be its master.

(Houle, 1972:96)

Tough (1979:19) carried out a survey to improve on the anecdotal evidence of self-directed learning referred to by Houle. His concern was not only with what and why adults learn, but how they learn and the type of help they receive for learning. One of his most significant findings was that very little of the learning was directed for formal credit and instead it fell into what Houle defined as 'learning oriented' or learning for its own sake.

Tough was also interested to find out what motivated adults to begin a learning project and found that his subjects overwhelmingly anticipated several desired outcomes and benefits. Pleasure and self-esteem were two critical elements in the motivation of his subjects. His conclusion was that an adult proceeds through certain phases when engaged in a learning project, and by helping them gain increased competence in dealing with each phase may improve their learning effectiveness (Tough, 1979:6).

Knowles (1975) was also influential in the development of adult learning theory. However, his work was not research-oriented, like that of Houle and Tough, and instead focused on the implications of self-directed learning for teachers and learners, and for the theory of adult education and lifelong learning. He defined self-directed learning as:

A process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

(Knowles, 1975:18)

Knowles is best known for his 'theory of andragogy' or theory of adult learning which he contrasted with pedagogy (which is concerned with the teaching of children). His andragogical model is based on several assumptions that are different from those of the pedagogical model. These assumptions are:



1. ***The need to know.*** Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking it. Thus, one of the first tasks of the facilitator of learning is to help the learners become aware of "the need to know".
2. ***The learners' self concept.*** Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions and their own lives. Once they have arrived at that self-concept, they develop a deep psychological need to be seen and treated by others as being capable of self-direction. They resent and resist situations in which they feel others are imposing their wills on them.
3. ***The role of the learners' experiences.*** Adults come into an education activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths. This means that any group of adults will be more heterogeneous in terms of background, learning style, motivation, needs, interests, and goals than is true of a group of youths. Hence, greater emphasis in adult education is placed on individualisation of teaching and learning strategies.
4. ***Readiness to Learn.*** Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with real-life situations. An especially rich source of 'readiness to learn' is the developmental tasks associated with moving from one developmental stage to the next.
5. ***Orientation to learning.*** In contrast to children's and youths' subject-centred orientation to learning (at least in school), adults are life-centred (or task-centred or problem-centred) in their orientation to learning.
6. ***Motivation.*** While adults are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, higher salaries, and the like), the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, and the like).

(Knowles et al., 1998:64-68)

Brookfield (1985) was one of the most important writers who extended the ideas propagated by Knowles. He has been quite critical of the research traditions, that Tough represents. One of his most important criticisms is that the concept of self-direction has been divorced from the social context or setting in which learning takes place. Brookfield argued that individual learners need to examine their own perceptions of the social world. He rejected the 'technicist' perspective on self-directed learning, which is concerned only with ways in which learners can plan their own learning, access their own resources and achieve their aims and instead propounded that:

When the techniques of self-directed learning are allied with the adult's quest for critical reflection and the creation of personal meaning after due consideration of a range of alternative value frameworks and actions possibilities, then the most complete form of self-directed learning is exemplified. This most fully adult form of self-directed learning is one in which critical reflection on the contextual and contingent aspects of reality, the exploration of alternative perspectives and meaning systems, and the alteration of personal and social circumstances are all present.

(Brookfield, 1985:15)

Writers like Brookfield (1985) identified personal growth with social change. According to Jarvis (1998:85), this represents a shift from the initial conception of self-directed learning as an entirely individual expression of how people learn.

### **3.4.2 Applicability of adult learning theories to the distance learning context**

The reviewed adult learning theories are all related to self-directed learning and are very relevant to the distance learning context. In fact many ideas in the theories/models of autonomy and independence are derived from adult learning theories. This is not surprising as adult learning theories have a longer and more



established tradition than distance learning. How applicable are these adult learning theories to UKM distance learning context? This is something that cannot be determined at this juncture as no research has been carried out in this area in the UKM context. However, the findings of this thesis will be able to shed more light in this matter as this thesis intends to draw upon theories of adult learning in interpreting the data.

### 3.5 The theoretical construct of the thesis

Having reviewed the theories relevant to my thesis and having explained why I decided to adopt a constructivist construct, I will now attempt to define the construct I have adopted. There are different interpretations of 'constructivism'. Piaget (1966)'s work has been identified as a 'mild' version of 'constructivism' where "knowledge is actively constructed by the learner and not passively transmitted by the educator"(Boudourides, 1998:1). On the other extreme is Glaserfeld's version of 'constructivism' (1984, 1987, 1990) which has been described as 'radical' based on the notion that the knower does not necessarily construct knowledge of a 'real' world. This view does not deny the existence of objective reality, but simply states that we have no way of knowing what that reality might be. So how can people with different world's views communicate? From this perspective, communication needs not involve shared meanings. It is sufficient for the meanings to be compatible (Hardy and Taylor, 1997). According to this view, cognition is regarded as adaptive, i.e., based on and constantly modified by a learner's experience based on information derived from the environment. Another well-known version is social 'constructivism'. As discussed earlier, this view is derived from that of Piaget but emphasises the importance of social context for cognitive development. In addition to the above versions, there is one more that is highly relevant to learning a L2 i.e., cultural 'constructivism'. This interpretation proposes that beyond the immediate

social environment of a learning situation, there are the wider context of cultural influences, including customs, religion, biology, tools and language (Vosniadou, 1996).

All the views described are relevant to learning a L2 in a distance learning context. However, the construct of my thesis is based only on Vygotsky social 'constructivism' and Glaserfeld's radical 'constructivism'. The view that I am adopting is that the construction of meaning through language is influenced by the social context which in the case of my thesis is the distance learning context. Factors in this context will directly or indirectly influence meaningful learning. This view is compatible with that of Vygotsky's. I also hold the view that learners' views/conceptions of language learning, their language learning processes and the courses they are taken will influence meaningful learning. This view is compatible to that of Glaserfeld's.



## CHAPTER 4

# Methodological considerations

### 4.1 Introduction

Having considered some of the important theoretical concepts that form the basis for the research, I will now go on to discuss the methodological considerations that have shaped the research. Ramsden (1981) pointed out that "discussions of methodology in educational research enter dangerous terrain as little but platitudes can be stated without incurring the criticism of someone" (p.61). This results from the fact that very different views exist about the proper approach to carry out a research. The controversy between whether the qualitative or quantitative approach is a better way to carry out research is an ongoing one and something that cannot be resolved easily. But, in spite of this controversy, it has generally been accepted that "all pieces of research in education are in a sense contribution to methodological debates about how it should best be undertaken" (Ramsden: 1981:61). With this in mind, the present chapter is written.

The thesis does not intend to examine the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches in depth. Instead, it is going to describe only the more prevalent features of each approach and then present a brief discussion of the more recent literature on research traditions which have relevance to this thesis. In addition, a discussion of the integration of approaches will be included since the research methodology of Study Three of this thesis is hybrid in nature. Next, the research design of the thesis will be given and this will be followed by justification

of the methodology adopted to enable a better understanding of it. After that, a report of the pilot studies will be presented to lend further support to the rationale for the chosen methodology. (More in-depth information of the various methods utilised will be given in Chapter 6 on 'Study One', Chapter 8 on 'Study two' and Chapters 9 and 10 on 'Study Three'.)

## **4.2 Qualitative and quantitative research traditions: Choosing a principled pathway**

There has been a continuous debate with regard to the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. At one extreme are researchers who claim that there is a gulf between the two research traditions and that they belong to distinctively different paradigms (Layder, 1988 ), and at the other extreme are researchers who claim that qualitative and quantitative research are indistinguishable in many respects (Reichardt and Cook, 1979:232) . The generally-accepted fundamental difference between the two research traditions is that quantitative research has its philosophical roots in the positivistic philosophy and the qualitative approach, in the naturalistic philosophy. Newman and Benz (1998) explained this as follows:

Virtually all qualitative researchers, regardless of their theoretical differences, reflect some sort of individual phenomenological perspective. Most quantitative research approaches, regardless of their theoretical differences, tend to emphasise that there is a common reality on which people can agree.

(Newman and Benz, 1998:2)

Brannen (1992:4-9) claimed that the most important difference between quantitative and qualitative research is the way each treats data. According to her, in theory if not in practice, the quantitative researcher isolates and defines variables and variable categories which are linked together to frame hypotheses, often before the data are collected, and are then tested upon the data. In contrast, she continued, the qualitative



researcher begins with very general concepts which, as the research progresses, change their definitions. She described the second important difference being that the researchers use themselves as the instrument in qualitative research, attending to their own cultural assumptions as well as to the data, whereas in the case of the quantitative approach, the instrument is determined and finely-tuned in advance. In her opinion, the quantitative approach allows for much less flexibility, imaginative input and reflexivity. The third important difference, she gave as generalisation and extrapolation. She described generalisation as being associated with the quantitative paradigm. According to her, one of the prime concerns of quantitative research is to what extent the findings can be generalised to a general or parent population. However, the issue of generalisability does not arise in the same way in qualitative research. What is of concern in this case is the possibility of replicating the findings in similar cases or set of conditions and to what extent the findings can be extrapolated to the theory that the research has been designed to test. She further pointed out that quantitative methods frequently utilise statistical measures to analyse data whereas qualitative research does not.

Thus, it would appear that the two approaches represent different ways of thinking about and understanding the world around us and different ways of treating, collecting and analysing data. The distinction between the two research tradition can be summarised as follows:

quantitative research is obtrusive and controlled, objective, generalisable, outcome oriented, and assumes the existence of 'facts' which are somehow external to and independent of the observer or researcher. Qualitative research, on the other hand, assumes that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic, ungeneralisable studies are justifiable..... In metaphorical terms, quantitative research, is 'hard' while qualitative research is 'soft'.

(Nunan, 1992:3)

However, there are researchers who argued that, in practical terms, qualitative and quantitative research are in many respects indistinguishable. Reichardt and Cook

(1979) claimed that "researchers in no way follow the principles of a supposed paradigm without simultaneously assuming methods and values of the alternate paradigm" (p.232).

Chauldron (1988), Grotjahn (1987), and Newman and Benz (1998) also attempted to go beyond this basic distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Chauldron argued that there are four research traditions in applied linguistics: the psychometric tradition, interaction analysis, discourse analysis, and ethnography. Nunan (1992), however, commented that discourse analysis and interaction analysis are methods of data analysis rather than distinct research traditions in their own right, and that these methods can be (and have been) utilised by researchers working in both psychometric and ethnographic tradition. He further argued that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is a real one and stated that:

the extent to which one is prepared to accept or reject particular methods of inquiry and the studies utilising methods will depend on one's view of the world, and the nature of knowledge. For some people the notion that there are external truths 'out there' which are independent of the observer is self-evident. For others, this notion, which underlies the quantitative approach of research is questionable.

(Nunan, 1992:12)

However, Grotjahn (1987:59-60) argued that the qualitative-quantitative distinction is an oversimplification and proposed two 'pure' research paradigms. Paradigm 1 is described as being the 'exploratory-interpretive' one which utilises a non-experimental method, yields qualitative data, and provides an interpretive analysis of that data. Paradigm 2 which is called an 'analytical-nomological' paradigm, is one in which the data are collected through an experiment, and yields quantitative data which are subjected to statistical analysis. In addition, he suggested that there are six 'mixed' paradigms. Each mixes and matches these variables in different ways.

Newman and Benz (1998:9) also argued against the qualitative/quantitative division. They were of the opinion that the qualitative versus quantitative dichotomy is false.



They believed that this dichotomy is "not consistent with a coherent philosophy of science" and that "the notion of a continuum is the only construct that fits what we know in a scientific sense" (p.9). They suggested that "what are known as qualitative methods are beginning points, foundation strategies, which often are followed by quantitative methodologies" (p.9), and suggested the use of diverse methods to tackle a research problem. Burges (1982) believed that qualitative/quantitative research is each valid in its own right, and did not support Newman and Benz's view that qualitative methods should be used as a means towards setting up quantitative research. However, he supported the use of diverse methods, and described them as 'multiple research strategies'. According to this view, field methods that do not encompass observation, informant interviewing and sampling are seen as narrow and inadequate. The argument behind this is that researchers ought to be flexible, and select a range of methods that are appropriate to the research problem under investigation (Burgess, 1984). Denzin (1970:310), much earlier, developed the term 'triangulation' to refer to multiple investigators and theories besides multiple methods and data. This term, has now, by and large been used to refer to the use of more than one method of investigation and hence more than one type of data (Bryman, 1988:131).

There is much controversy with regard to the conditions under which multiple methods ought to be combined. According to Brannen (1992:12), some researchers advocated the complementary position. In contrast, other researchers, such as Denzin (1970), proposed the integrative position. The former approach is used in relation to a different research problem or different aspect of a research problem, whereas the latter involves combining research strategies as a means of examining the same research problem in the belief that this would enhance the validity of the conclusions that could be reached about the data.

Much criticism has been voiced against the assumptions that integrating approaches ensures the validity of data (Fielding and Fielding, 1986:31; Hammersley and

Atkinson, 1983:199; Bryman, 1988:133). There have been serious doubts that "data generated by different methods can simply be aggregated to produce a single unitary picture of what is assumed to be the 'truth' (i.e., valid)" (Brannen: 1992:13). These doubts or criticisms have their roots in the epistemological divide underpinning many of the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches. This view associates qualitative and quantitative research with certain clusters of methods of data collection. Quantitative research is strongly associated with social survey techniques like structured interviewing and self-administered questionnaires, experiments, structured observation, content analysis, the analysis of official statistics and the like. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is typically associated with participation observation, semi- and unstructured interviewing, focus groups, the qualitative examinations of texts, and various language-based techniques like conversation and discourse analysis. Bryman (1992) acknowledged the influence of epistemological and theoretical positions on the character of both quantitative and qualitative research, but further argued:

this is not to say that they are forever rooted to their original epistemological roots. Instead, the two approaches to research can have and do have independence from their epistemological beginnings. As general approaches to social research, each has its own strengths and weaknesses as an approach to the conduct of social research. It is these strengths and weaknesses that lie behind the rationale for integrating them.

(Bryman, 1992:59)

Bryman (1988) summarised the different ways in which quantitative and qualitative research had been combined. The ways include (1) triangulation; (2) qualitative research facilitating quantitative research and vice versa; (3) combining qualitative and quantitative research to form a general picture; and (4) viewing data from researchers' and subjects' perspectives. He found that the context within which the integration of quantitative and qualitative research was most frequently encountered was in terms of triangulation. Bryman (1992:64), however, cautioned that the combination of qualitative and quantitative research for the purposes of triangulation



is by no mean unproblematic. The first difficulty, he warned, is the possibility that the qualitative and quantitative research may not be tapping the same things, even when they are examining apparently similar issues, due to their different preoccupations and highly contrasting strengths and weaknesses.

The second difficulty is deciding how to respond if the qualitative evidence does not confirm the quantitative results (and vice versa). He found that many researchers tended to regard their qualitative evidence as much more trustworthy than their quantitative data. He warned "that this a very arbitrary criterion for deciding which set of findings should be plumped for", instead he suggested that "researchers should treat inconsistent findings as suggestive of new lines of enquiry" (Bryman, 1992:64).

The third difficulty is knowing what a conflict in results actually comprises. He explained that it is fairly rare for one set of findings to confirm the other set in their entirety. Instead, it is quite often the case that qualitative findings qualify quantitative results or generate some additional information. Whatever methods are used, however, as Bryman (1992:68) pointed out, integrating qualitative and quantitative research is not superior to a single method. The important thing should be to ensure that the research methods used are appropriate for the research problem under investigation. Having discussed views on qualitative and quantitative approaches, I will proceed to present the overall research design of this thesis.

### 4.3 Overall research design

In this section I will describe the methodological approach to the research. In the following section, the rationale for the approach will be presented. The approach used in this thesis was primarily a quantitative one. The thesis undertook to investigate the learning styles in learning English, approaches to studying in general (i.e. in studying all subjects), and perceptions of courses of Malaysian ESL learners through statistical analysis of questionnaires. Comparisons between on-campus and distance learners of three different proficiency levels and of three different disciplines on the areas investigated were also undertaken. In addition, statistical means were used to find out whether there were any associations between their approaches to studying in general and their perceptions of the EPCs they took.

The questionnaire comprises three sub-questionnaires namely:

Sub-questionnaire One – "How do you learn English?" Questionnaire

Sub-questionnaire Two – New approaches to studying Inventory

Sub-questionnaire Three – New Course Perceptions Questionnaire

The results of each sub-questionnaire were analysed separately as Study One, Study Two and Study Three. The statistical analysis of whether there were any associations between the on-campus learners and distance learners' approaches to studying in general, and their perceptions of the EPCs that they took, were also undertaken in Study Three. A qualitative component in the form of semi-structured interviews was incorporated to enhance the quantitative component of Study Three. (See Fig.4.1 for more information on the research methods used and Fig.4.2 for a diagrammatic representation of the research design.)



Study	Nature of Investigation	Research Approach used	Research method used	Analysis employed
One (in Chapters 5 & 6)	Investigation of Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning styles in learning English	Quantitative	Sub-questionnaire 1: How do you learn English?	1. Item Analysis 2. Factor Analysis
Two (in Chapters 7 & 8)	Investigation of Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying in general	Quantitative	Sub-questionnaire 2: New Approaches to Studying Inventory	1. Item Analysis 2. Scale Analysis 3. Factor Analysis
Three (in Chapters 9 & 10)	Investigation of Malaysian ESL learners' perceptions of their EPCs and the associations between these perceptions and their approaches to studying in general	Quantitative	Sub-questionnaire 3: New Course Perceptions questionnaire	1. Item Analysis 2. Scale Analysis 3. Factor Analysis
		Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	Data analysis

Fig. 4.1 Research methods used for the various studies

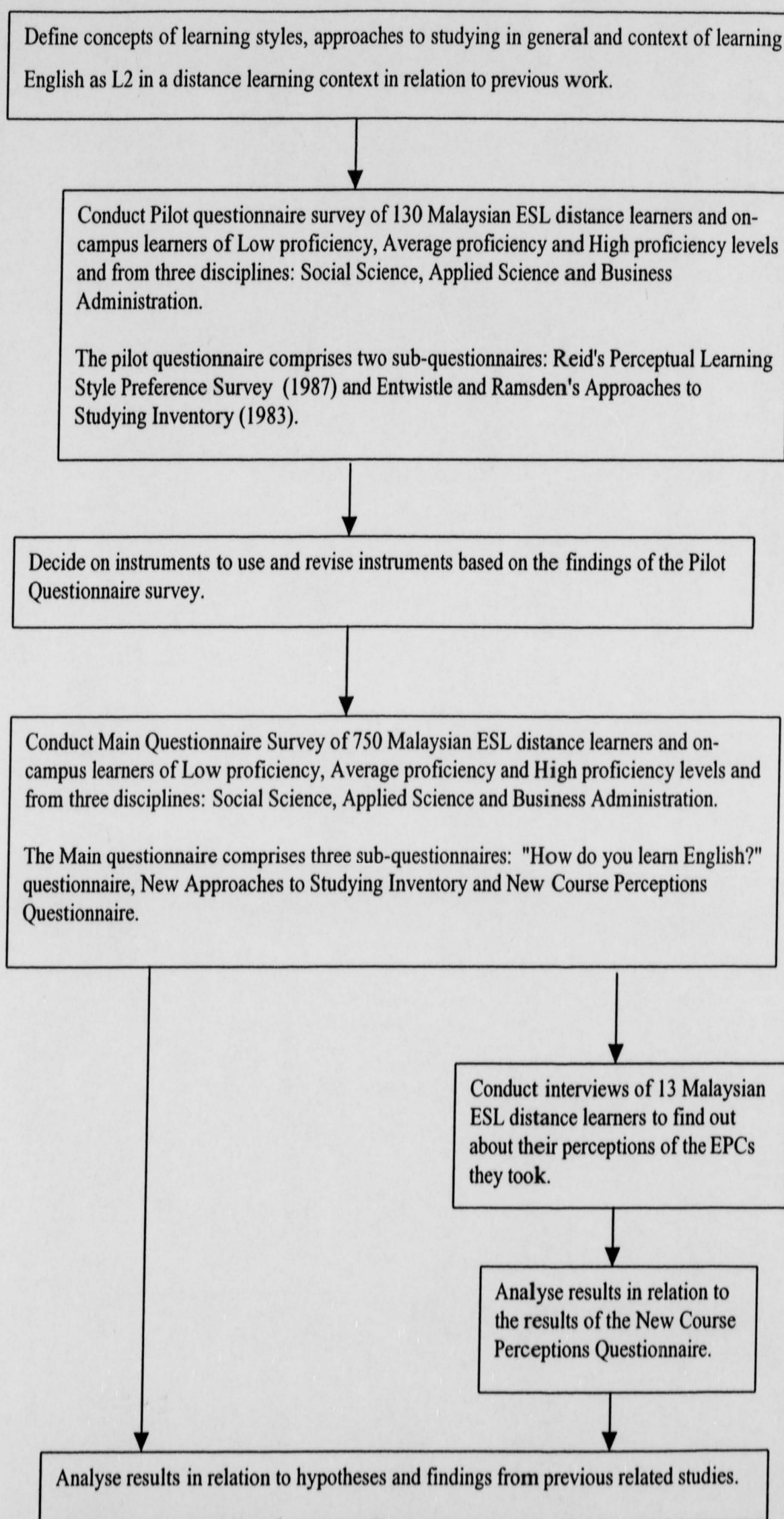


Fig. 4.2 Research Design



## 4.4 Justification of methodology used

In Chapter One, I explained why I decided to investigate learning styles, approaches to learning and perceptions of courses. In this section I will discuss in greater detail what made me decide on the chosen methodology. As indicated in Chapter One, my main intention in investigating the above-mentioned variables was to identify some general patterns or trends that can help me to come up with a strategy for developing a distance learning ESL programme for Malaysian students. As discussed in Chapter 3, identification of general patterns or trends that can be generalised to a general or parent population is one of the prime concerns of quantitative research (Brannen, 1992). Thus, it would appear that a quantitative approach would be most appropriate for the purpose of this thesis.

I am aware of the weaknesses of quantitative research as pointed out by many researchers who are more in favour of qualitative research. For example, as mentioned earlier, Brannen (1992) criticised quantitative research for allowing "less flexibility, imaginative input, and reflexivity" (p.5), and Bassey (1995:89-97) claimed that few generalisations arising from quantitative research are of use to the teacher. However, after a careful evaluation of these criticisms, I decided that a primarily quantitative approach was still most appropriate for my research as it would allow me to collect data from a large sample of students which I would not be possible with a purely qualitative approach.

The next question I had to consider was what quantitative research method(s) should I adopt. Willing (1988) used questionnaire successfully in his study to investigate learning styles, and Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) to investigate approaches to studying and perceptions of courses. Their studies have inspired many to undertake research along the same lines. However, to the best of my knowledge, none of these

studies have involved distance learning of English as L2. In view of that, my investigations along the same lines, with different sample population would offer ample opportunity for comparisons. Furthermore, using a questionnaire is advantageous for the following reasons:

1. It offers wider distribution and thus subsequent reduction in distribution bias.
2. It tends to be more reliable because it is anonymous.
3. There is a possibility that it may be mailed.
4. They are easy to administer.
5. The use of fixed response items reduces the variability in the results that may be caused by differences in interviews.
6. Coding, analysis and interpretation of data are relatively simple.

(Cohen and Manion, 1992 and Malhorta, 1996)

The distribution and administration of questionnaires also suited me very well as I was only given permission to return to Malaysia from England for only three months to undertake my data collection.

I was aware that there are drawbacks in using a questionnaire. Fig. 4.3 presents a list of them. Certain measures had been undertaken to minimise/control some of these drawbacks. These will also be described in Fig. 4.3.



Drawbacks in using a questionnaire	Measures undertaken to minimise/control it
1. There is often too low a percentage of returns.	Questionnaires were distributed through two means: directly to students and through their instructors.
2. If only closed items are used, participants may not be able to give their responses as honestly as possible due to limited choices.	Used of reputable questionnaires that had been well tested.
3. Respondents may not be willing to write their answers to open items.	not relevant as the questionnaires did not contain any open-ended items.
4. Questionnaires present problems to people of limited literacy.	not relevant as sample population comprised students with required level of literacy to understand the questionnaire.
5. Questionnaires are often filled in hurriedly whereas an interview can be conducted at an appropriate speed.	Students were given ample time to fill in and return the questionnaires.
6. The respondents may be unwilling to provide the desired information.	Unavoidable – could easily apply to interviews as well.
7. Respondents may not be consciously aware of the motives.	
8. Respondents may be unwilling to respond if their information requested is sensitive or personal.	
9. Structured items and fixed alternatives may result in loss of validity for certain types of data, such as beliefs and attitudes.	Used of reputable questionnaires that had been well tested.
10. Wording items properly is not easy.	

Fig. 4.3 List of drawbacks in using a questionnaire and measure to minimise them (Cohen and Manion, 1992; Malhorta, 1996)

As explained earlier, a qualitative component was incorporated only in Study Three which investigates students' perceptions of their English Language Proficiency Courses and not in the other two studies. I would like to explain the reasons for this decision. Interviews were not incorporated in Study One, which investigates Learning Styles in learning English as L2 as a survey of literature shows that the quantitative approach has been used effectively in studies investigating learning styles including learning styles of ESL learners (refer to Reid, 1987; Willing, 1988, Oxford et al., 1995).

Interviews would be very useful for Study Two, which investigates approaches to studying in general (i.e. in learning all subjects). Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) had demonstrated the effectiveness of interviews for this purpose in their studies. However, I felt it was unnecessary to use interviews for this study as Entwistle and Ramsden had used interviews to test and retest the validity of the scales/subscales of Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI). In addition, considerable research has been carried out using the ASI in various parts of the world, including studies on distance learning students, and all, except for a few of these studies, yielded results attesting to the validity of the ASI. (More information regarding Entwistle and Ramsden's work, and these studies will be given in Chapter 7).

Entwistle and Ramsden (in Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983, Ramsden, 1981) also carried out interviews to test the validity of their Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ) (see Chapter 9 for more information regarding their work). However, there was still a need to include interviews as the context and sample population of my Study Three were very different from theirs. Their studies investigated on-campus college students from various disciplines studying content courses, whereas my study focused on students from three disciplines learning/studying English as L2 through the distance learning mode. In view of these differences, I believe that including interviews would strengthen the validity of this study. Furthermore, interviews have the following advantages:



1. There is no problem with non-response, unlike questionnaires.
2. Interviews provide an opportunity for in-depth probing and elaborations, clarifications of items (if necessary).
3. Interviews provide more opportunity to gain more in-depth reactions. It can also be used to cross reference the questionnaire data.
4. Through the interviews, it may be possible to obtain clarifications of trends evident in the questionnaire data.
5. Interviews may help to clarify ambiguities or controversies found in the questionnaire data.

(Wiersma, 1991 and Mohammed, 1999)

Finally, with regard to students' reactions towards being interviewed, there is a possibility that they may be more willing to share opinions on personal or sensitive issues in interviews than in questionnaires. On the other hand, it can also be argued that there is also the possibility that students may be more willing to give their opinions in questionnaires that are anonymous, than in interviews. Despite these different viewpoints, I believe that there is a greater likelihood of obtaining richer and more diversified data from interviews than from questionnaires. The condition is that interviewees must trust the interviewer and feel at ease with him/her.

The discussion undertaken in this section has explained why triangulation was necessary for Study Three whereas questionnaires sufficed for Study One and Two. In this next section I will review two pilot studies undertaken to test the suitability of two instruments which were initially chosen to investigate the research problem of this thesis.

## 4.5 A review of the pilot studies

The two instruments initially chosen to investigate the research problem of this thesis were Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Survey (PLSPS) (Reid, 1987) and Entwistle and Ramsden's Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). The PLSPS was chosen to investigate Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their perceptual learning styles in learning English, and the ASI, to investigate their conceptions of their approaches to studying in general (i.e. in studying of all subjects). In the section that follows, I will describe and discuss each pilot study in turn, highlighting the main findings and results of each study. I will also discuss the suitability of the instruments for my research.

### 4.5.1 Pilot Study One: ESL Learners' Conceptions of their Perceptual Learning Styles

#### 4.5.1.1 Research Design

##### *Research instrument*

For this study, Reid's PLSPS was used. It consists of a series of thirty items devised by Reid (1987) based on Dunn's learning style inventory (1983, 1984). Reid made some modifications to his classification of items. In his model, Dunn suggested that learners have four basic perceptual learning channels (or modalities).



They are:

1. Visual learning: reading, studying charts;
2. Auditory learning: listening to lectures, audiotapes;
3. Kinesthetic learning: experiential learning, that is, total physical involvement with a learning situation;
4. Tactile learning: 'hands-on' learning such as models or doing laboratory experiments.

Reid's PLSPS (1987) comprises items that cover the above four perceptual learning channels. In addition, it also includes another dimension, that is 'group learning' vs. 'non-group learning'. (See Appendix 4A for copy of Reid's PLSPS). The items in the PLSPS can be classified into the following six categories:

1. Visual learning (VL )
2. Auditory learning (AL)
3. Kinesthetic (KL)
4. Tactile learning (TL)
5. Group learning (GL)
6. Non-group learning (NGL)

For my pilot study, I decided to classify Kinesthetic learning and Tactile learning as one category as I felt that there is a great deal of overlap between these two channels of learning. In my opinion, a learning experience that involves total physical involvement can very well be one that involves 'hands-on' learning such as making a model or doing a laboratory experiment. Hence, I decided to classify the items into the following five categories:

1. Visual learning (VL )
2. Auditory learning (AL)
3. Kinesthetic and Tactile learning (KTL)
4. Group learning (GL)
5. Non-group learning (NGL)

### **Subjects**

The subjects of this study comprised second-year distance learners and second-year on-campus learners taking the English proficiency courses offered by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The subjects were from three different disciplines: Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc) and Business Administration (BusAdm) and were of three different proficiency levels. The low proficiency (Lo) learners were those who obtained Pass 7, Pass 8 and Fail 9 in their SPM. The average proficiency (Av) learners were those who obtained Credits 3 and 4 in their SPM, and the high proficiency (Hi) learners obtained Distinctions 1 and 2 in the SPM.

The initial decision was to distribute the questionnaire (the PLSPS and ASI were distributed together as one questionnaire) to distance learners only, since the initial intention of my research was to use only distance learners as the subjects. However, after much contemplation, I decided at the last minute to include on-campus learners to allow for comparison of responses of learners from the two different modes of learning. 139 completed questionnaires from the distance learners were returned, but due to the fact that the decision to include on-campus learners was decided at a very late stage, it was not possible to obtain the desired number of respondents from this group. Only 39 completed questionnaires were returned, out of 200 distributed questionnaires. Fig. 4.4 gives a breakdown of the subjects that responded to the questionnaire.



Mode	Proficiency level	Discipline			Total
Distance learners		SocSc	ApplSc	BusAdm	
	Lo	30	16	10	56
	Av	6	11	19	36
	Hi	9	16	13	38
	Total	45	43	42	130
On-campus learners	Lo	7	0	0	7
	Av	13	0	0	13
	Hi	11	8	0	19
	Total	31	8	0	39

Fig. 4.4 Breakdown of respondents according to categories

### Procedures

The PLSPS questionnaires were distributed to 200 second-year distance learners belonging to the three disciplines (SocSc, ApplSc, and BusAdm) and the three proficiency levels (Lo, Av, and Hi) during their first tutorial, which was held on the fourth week of the semester, and collected on the following day. Altogether, 139 completed questionnaires were returned. No time limit was given to complete the questionnaires, but students were advised not to ponder over the items and to answer each spontaneously. Students who forgot to bring the questionnaires the following day were asked to post them to me. As for the on-campus learners, since the decision to include them was a last-minute one, the questionnaires were distributed only on the thirteenth week of the semester (which was the second last week of the semester). In view of this, it was only possible to obtain 39 completed questionnaires, out of a total of 200 distributed questionnaires.

## Summary of results

In this section, I will summarise the results obtained from an analysis of the data. Calculation of Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient of the five categories that I derived from Reid (1987), comparison of the mean scores of each item and comparison of mean scores of the five categories were completed using SPSS (Version 9) statistical package. ANOVA and t-tests were employed in the comparison of mean scores.

1. The results indicated reliability of classification of items into categories for Group Learning, Non-Group Learning and Kinesthetic Tactile Learning. (Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients were all above 0.7). As for Auditory Learning and Visual Learning, the reliability coefficients were below the normally accepted values ( $\alpha$  values of 0.60 and 0.67 respectively). However, since this was an exploratory study,  $\alpha$  coefficients of above 0.6 were accepted for analysis purposes.
2. Item analysis using t-tests showed that the differences in responses between distance learners and on-campus learners were very minimal which suggested that mode of learning did not have much influence on conceptions of perceptual learning styles. The significant differences were evident for only the following three items:

Q.4 I learn more when I study with a group.

Q.20 I learn better in class when I listen to someone.

Q.25 I enjoy making something for a class project.

The significant differences seemed to be the result of more distance learners choosing '3' (undecided) as their responses. This suggested that it would be advisable to eliminate '3' as a choice in future research to 'force' learners to make firm decisions.



3. Comparisons of the mean scores between distance learners and on-campus learners for the various categories of items using t-tests revealed no significant results, reaffirming the lack of influence of mode of learning on conceptions of perceptual learning styles.
4. An analysis of the differences in the responses for each category of items among the three proficiency levels (for both distance learners and on-campus learners combined) using ANOVA, revealed significant results for Visual Learning, Auditory Learning and Kinesthetics Learning. More specifically, Low Proficiency learners preferred Visual learning and Auditory Learning the least, and Average Proficiency learners tended to favour Kinesthetic Tactile learning the most. There were, however, no significant results for Group Learning and Non-Group Learning suggesting that learners from all three proficiency levels did not have significantly different views on these categories.
5. Item analysis and mean score comparisons carried out on learners from the three different disciplines (SocSc, ApplSc and BusAdm) revealed no significant differences in responses, suggesting that disciplines did not affect perceptual learning styles.

### ***Suitability of the research instrument***

The findings, though promising, are limited in scope. Three obvious conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the study in relation to learning English as L2 are: (1) mode of learning does not influence conceptions of perceptual learning styles; (2) proficiency levels do influence conceptions of perceptual learning styles; and (3) disciplines do not influence conceptions of perceptual learning styles. One of the

main limitations of Reid's questionnaire is that it focuses only on perceptual learning styles. To cover a wider range of aspects of learning styles for a more comprehensive investigation of learning styles, Willing's questionnaire (1988) entitled "How I learn best" would be more appropriate. Willing's learning style construct, based on responses of Australian adult migrant ESL learners to the questionnaires, draws upon the work of Witkin and Goodenough (1981) and Kolb's learning style inventory (1976). It not only covers more aspects but is theoretically more sound. (A more in depth discussion of Willing's study will be given in Chapter 5.)

## **4.5.2 Pilot Study Two: ESL Learners' Conceptions of their Approaches to Studying**

### **4.5.2.1 Research Design**

#### ***Research instrument***

The Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI), developed by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983), was used for this pilot study (see Appendix 4B for a copy of the questionnaire). The version chosen was the one used by Lancaster University to examine how students in higher education learnt (Ramsden, 1983). The items in the ASI are not organised in any particular order, but they can be grouped to form what are known as scales and subscales when the results are analysed. For this pilot study, all the scales/subscales in the ASI were included. Fig. 4.5 gives a breakdown of the items under each scale/subscale and its meaning.



Scale/Subscale	Meaning
<b>I. Meaning Orientation (also known as Deep Approach to Studying)</b>	<b>High scores for this scale (which is made up of the four subscales listed below) indicate that students intend to understand what is being studied.</b>
a. Deep Approach	High scores indicate that students are looking for meaning in their studying, interacting actively with what is being learnt, and linking what they are studying with real life.
b. Use Of Evidence	High scores indicate that students are examining evidence critically and using it cautiously.
c. Relating Ideas	High scores show that students are actively relating new information to previous knowledge.
d. Intrinsic Motivation	High scores mean that students are interested in what they are learning for its sake.
<b>II. Reproducing Orientation (also known as Surface Approach to Studying)</b>	<b>High scores for this scale (which is made up of the four subscales listed below) indicate that students intend to reproduce what they are studying.</b>
a. Surface approach	High scores show that students are relying on rote learning.
b. Syllabus-boundedness	High scores indicate an intention to restrict learning to the defined syllabus and specific tasks.
c. Fear of failure	High scores indicate that students lack self-confidence and are anxiously aware of assessment requirements.
d. Improvidence	High scores mean that students are not prepared to look for relationships between ideas and are fact-bound.
<b>III. Strategic Orientation</b>	<b>High scores for this scale (which is made up of the three subscales listed below) indicate that students are studying to gain qualifications for employment and see this task as a game which they must win.</b>
a. Extrinsic motivation	High scores mean that the students see qualifications as the main source for learning.
b. Strategic approach	High scores show that students are actively seeking information about assessment requirements and trying to impress staff.
c. Achievement motivation	High scores indicate competitive and self-confident students, driven by hope for success.

<b>1V. Non-academic Orientation</b>	<b>High scores for this scale (which made up of the three scales listed below) indicate that students have little concern for academic requirements and are experiencing study difficulties linked to poor academic performance.</b>
a. Disorganised study methods	<u>Low</u> scores show that students report they are organising their time effectively and planning ahead.
b. Negative attitudes	High scores mean that students have little involvement with their work and are cynical and disenchanted about higher education.
c. Globetrotting	High scores indicate that students are over-ready to generalise and jump to conclusions without evidence.
<b>Comprehension Learning</b>	<b>High scores show that students use illustrations, analogies and intuition to build up a general picture of what they are learning.</b>
<b>Operation Learning</b>	<b>High scores indicate that students concentrate on details and logical analysis</b>

Fig. 4.5 Breakdown of items under each scale/subscale and its meaning.

The ASI was designed to provide information about "how students typically tackle academic tasks in relation to the academic environment they perceive themselves to be working in" (Ramsden, 1983:9). Ramsden described Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation as being more 'global' as they have been consistently identified in studies on approaches to studying (such as those carried out by the Gothenburg research group in the mid-1970s). As for the other two groups, Non-academic Orientation and Strategic Orientation, he described them as being less clearly defined and less easy to defend statistically. The analysis of the results of this pilot study will be based on Ramsden's definitions of the various terminology used in the ASI. They are as follows:



- a. **Meaning Orientation** is related to 'critical thinking' and involves using evidence effectively, an interest in the subject matter for its own sake, an active and critical interaction with what is being learnt, and the relating of academic knowledge to personal experience and 'real life'. This 'deep approach' leads to 'better learning' in all subject areas. In this context, 'better' is defined in terms of complexity or quality of understanding, satisfaction, self-rated performance in comparison with other students, long-term recall of factual material, degree results, course grades, or examination results. Meaning Orientation is consistently associated with progress.
- b. **Reproducing Orientation** is a narrow approach to studying in which students are anxiously over-concerned with assessment demands and are unable or unwilling to see the wider implications of what they are learning. Reproducing Orientation is consistently, but negatively, associated with progress.
- c. **Non-academic Orientation** distinguishes students who say they have disorganised study methods, who tend to jump to conclusions on the basis of inadequate evidence, and who have negative attitudes towards the courses they are taking and towards studying in general. Students scoring high on this scale tend to get poor grades. Non-academic Orientation is consistently, but negatively, associated with progress.
- d. Students scoring highly on **Strategic Orientation** are those who try to do well in their courses so that they can get a qualification. These students are very competitive. Strategic Orientation is consistently associated with progress.

### **Summary of results**

In this section, I will summarise the results obtained from an analysis of the data. Calculation of Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient of the scales/subscales of the ASI, comparison of the mean scores of each item and comparison of mean scores of the scales/subscales of the ASI were completed using SPSS (Version 9) statistical package. ANOVA and t-tests were employed in the comparison of mean scores.

1. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient value for Meaning Orientation was above 0.7 suggesting reliability of classification. Reliability coefficients for Reproducing Orientation, Strategic Orientation and Non-academic Orientation and for all the subscales were below 0.7 but above 0.6 suggesting less reliability in classification. The reliability coefficient for the scales of Comprehension Learning and Operation Learning were even lower, both below 0.5. Since this was an exploratory study and since the sample population was very small,  $\alpha$  coefficients of above 0.6 were accepted for analysis purposes.
2. Mean score analysis within modes revealed that both distance learners and on-campus learners possessed similar patterns of preferences with regard to different approaches to studying, notwithstanding whichever proficiency level or disciplines they were from. They generally showed a preference towards the deep approach to studying, were fairly motivated and committed to their studies and possessed fairly 'good study habits' (as defined by Ramsden, 1983:9).
3. Item analysis and mean scores comparison between modes using t-tests showed that distance learners utilised more deep approach studying techniques than on-campus learners. Their prime weakness seemed to be their tendency to follow the syllabus too closely. There was also some evidence that suggested less willingness to improvise and a more cautious attitude, in comparison to on-campus learners. Bearing in mind that these were distance learners relying mainly on their course books and syllabus for guidance, it is not surprising to find them overly concerned about restricting learning to the defined syllabus. Anxiety may also have a part to play in this, too. Both groups also appeared fairly motivated but distance learners seemed more sure of their academic goals and appeared to be 'better learners' (in Ramsden's terms, 1983:9).
4. The results showed that there were no significant differences in approaches to studying among the three proficiency groups, except for intrinsic motivation. Low proficiency learners appeared to be the most highly motivated. Since they were the weakest group, it is highly probable that they realised that they had the most to benefit from the EPCs.



5. The results also revealed the SocSc students to be the most competitive of the three disciplines. They were the ones that try the hardest to do well in their courses in order to get a qualification. It seemed they also used the deep approaches to studying more extensively than learners from the other disciplines and were better at improvising. However, they indicated a reluctance to speak at tutorials and to express reservations regarding the worth of their work. Their unwillingness to speak at tutorials might be due to the fact that they were afraid of 'losing face' in front of their coursemates. Their uncertainty about their work could be a result of having too high expectations of themselves. These are characteristics, I observed, to be prevalent among many competitive learners in Malaysia.
6. There appeared to be a high percentage of non-committal learners i.e., learners who chose category 2 (which was 'response is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer') as their responses in certain items. Since it is difficult to figure out why students chose this category, it would be advisable to leave out this category and 'force' these students to make a stand.

### ***Suitability of the research instrument***

Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study in relation to studying in general: (1) There was a general pattern of preference evident in learners from both modes that was not influenced by proficiency levels and disciplines. (2) Learners from both modes appeared fairly motivated, but distance learners seemed to be more certain of their academic goals and appeared to be 'better' learners (Ramsden's terms, 1983:9). However, distance learners tend to adhere too closely to the syllabus. (3) There appeared to be no difference in approaches to studying among proficiency levels except for intrinsic motivation. (4) There appeared to be little difference in approaches to studying among disciplines, except for greater competitiveness among the SocSc students.

These insights into the distance learners' and on-campus learners' approaches to studying derived from the results strongly suggested the suitability of the ASI for my research. However, I decided to choose another version of this questionnaire as this version is too lengthy and verbose. The chosen version, which was Entwistle and Tait's Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (1994), is shorter and more concise. (More detailed explanation as to why Entwistle and Tait's revised version was chosen will be provided in 8.2.2). In line with the findings, I also excluded category 2 of the responses since it would be difficult to determine the reasons for this choice.

As previously mentioned, the ASI was one of the two questionnaires developed by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) for the purpose of understanding how students in higher education learn. The other questionnaire which they developed was designed to investigate students' perceptions of their courses. Since it would add depth and scope to my research to incorporate this aspect, Entwistle and Ramsden's Course Perceptions questionnaire was included. However, due to time constraints it was not possible to carry out a pilot study based on this questionnaire. In addition, interview component was added to increase the validity of this questionnaire (as discussed earlier in section 4.3)

Having discussed the research methodology in detail and the justification for the use of the various research methods, I will next move on to analysing and discussing the results of each of the three studies. For each study, this will be preceded by a chapter/section that presents a critical review of relevant literature and empirical studies. Study One will be presented in Chapter 5 and 6, Study Two in Chapter 7 and 8, and Study Three in Chapter 9 and 10.



## CHAPTER 5

### Study One

# Conceptions of learning styles in learning English: Focusing on the literature

## 5.1 Introduction

Research into differences in learning styles does not have a long history. Interest in this field began in the 1970s, when work in psychology on 'individual differences' brought about new perceptions of the nature of those differences (Willing, 1988:39). Previously, in the field of learning theory, when behaviourists' ideas were dominant, individual differences had been assumed to be the same as differences in ability. Witkin and his associates (see for example Witkin, 1965; Witkin, 1977a, 1977b, Witkin et al., 1962) and other proponents of notion of 'cognitive style' argued it was not so, but their views had little impression upon clinical and other areas of applied psychology. However, with the moving away of psychology and learning theory from the stimulus/response model, the difference between individual differences and ability was generally accepted (see Messick, 1976:7-11 for a detailed explanation of the differences between the two).

In spite of this major shift in learning theory, interest in individual differences was still minimal. Mainstream cognitive psychologists (including information processing theorists and constructivists) were more interested in processes and mechanisms that were common to all individuals and tended to develop theories in this area. Second language researchers, however, were more interested in individual differences and this has led to an increase in interest in this field of research in applied linguistics in the last thirty years.

Brown (1987) divided psychological differences or variations in learning a second language into two main categories: (1) cognitive variations and (2) affective variations. He further divided cognitive variations into three sub-categories: (i) variations in processes common to all human beings, (ii) variations in learning styles that differ across individuals, and (iii) variations in strategies employed by each individual to attack particular problems in particular contexts. Affective factors, on the other hand, were divided into two sub-categories: (i) personality factors such as motivation, inhibition, risk taking, anxiety etc., and (ii) sociocultural factors such as: attitudes, acculturation, social distance etc. Other writers differed in their methods of classifications from that of Brown. Ellis (1985:100) pointed out that identification and classification of the different factors was not an easy task as they are qualities that are not easily observable. Terminology for some of these factors also varies, which further complicates matters. In addition, labels such as 'aptitude', 'motivation' or 'anxiety' cover clusters of behaviours and researchers have used these labels to describe different sets of behavioural traits, leading to difficulty in comparing and evaluating the results of their investigations (Ellis, 1985:100). However, the distinction between cognitive and affective variations is generally preserved.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will use Brown's classification as it has taken into consideration the key psychological differences or variations in L2. The review of literature, however, will be limited to that 'on variations in learning styles that differ across individuals' as the other types of variations are not within the scope of this thesis. Thus, in this chapter, I will begin by presenting and



discussing some of the definitions of learning styles. Then, I will proceed to discuss the various dimensions of learning styles. Discussion of empirical studies that have relevance to the study will be incorporated. Finally, Willing's study (1988) will be reviewed in considerable depth so as to provide a clear understanding of the theoretical background to the research in Study One.

## 5.2 Learning style

Before considering the various definitions of learning style, it is useful to differentiate between 'process', 'strategy', and 'style' as there is a good deal of confusion in the use of these terms. Brown (1987:78) pointed out some of these confusions. Tarone et al. (1976) considered 'process' and 'strategy' as synonymous. In addition, 'styles' and 'strategies' are often used interchangeably in the literature. Brown's (1987:78-79) definitions of these terms serve as a useful starting point for our discussion. He described 'process' as characteristic of every human being. He considered human needs for air, water, and food for survival as engagement in universal processes. Besides, engagement in certain levels or types of learning, such as those defined by Gagne (1965), was also considered as involvement in the processes of learning. Brown further suggested that principles of 'transfer' is used in the process of learning and retention.

Strategies, on the other hand, are described as specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information (Brown, 1987:79). Oxford (1990) felt that this technical definition does not convey the excitement or richness of learning strategies and add that learning strategies "are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effectiveness, and more transferable to new situations" (p.8).

In short, learning strategies can be said to 'time-variable', 'person-variable', 'task-variable', environment-variable and problem-solving in nature.

As for 'style', Brown (1987:79) described it as referring to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual. He further described it as general characteristics of intellectual functioning (and personality type, as well) that pertain to an individual, that differentiate him/her from someone else. However, the notion of learning style is more complex than that depicted by Brown. This will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Elements of learning style appeared in the research literature as early as 1892, but most of the earlier research (before 1940) was more interested in the relationship between memory, and oral or visual teaching methods (Keefe, 1987:6). The present day notion of 'learning style' was developed more recently than that of 'cognitive style'. Cognitive styles have been viewed as habitual modes of information processing but, according to Messick (1976:6), they are not simple habits in the technical sense of learning theory, for they are not directly responsive to principles of acquisition and extinction. They are also not easily modified by specific tuition and training. According to him, cognitive styles "may entail generalised habits of information processing, to be sure, but they developed in congenial ways around underlying personality trends" and thus, "intimately interwoven with affective, temperamental, and motivational structures as part of the total personality" (Messick, 1976:6). The most well-known research on cognitive style was on the Field Independence versus Field Dependence (FI/FD) polarity. The concept of FI/FD was developed in main stream psychology by Witkin in 1962. His study, and many others, on cognitive styles were derived experimentally from studies of perceptual processing. The various notions of cognitive styles put forward since the 1940s' have all remained centred on 'mental phenomenon', (Willing, 1988:52), and reflect the FI/FD dichotomy, although researchers may name these differently, for e.g., 'holist vs. serialist' (Pask, 1976a; 1976b) and 'holist vs. analytical' (Harnett, 1981).



Cognitive style and learning style have often been used synonymously but they are not the same. According to Keefe (1987:6), learning style is the broader term and includes cognitive along with affective and physiological styles. Keefe (1987) defined learning style as:

characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment.

(Keefe, 1987:5)

He described the affective components of learning style as encompassing aspects of personality that have to do with attention, emotion, and valuing, which cannot be observed directly but have to be inferred from the learner's interaction with the environment (Keefe, 1987:9). The physiological components of learning style, were described as "biologically-based modes of response that are founded on accustomed reaction to the physical environment, sex-related differences, and personal nutrition and health" (Keefe, 1987:13).

There are other definitions of learning styles worth looking into. Garger and Guild (1984) defined learning styles as "stable and pervasive characteristics of an individual, expressed through the interaction of one's behaviours and personality as one approaches a learning task" (p. 11). Claxton and Murrell (1987) came up with an intriguing way of defining learning styles. They used an onion metaphor (adapted from Curry, 1983) in which layers of the onion represent 'layers' of learning style:

- Basic personality characteristics form the core
- Information-processing characteristics form the second layer
- Social interaction characteristics form a third layer
- Instructional preferences form the fourth and outermost layer.

They postulated that the core of the onion represents the most stable characteristics with each successive layer being progressively more amenable to change.

There is no generally agreed-upon definition for learning style, although the idea of pervasiveness or consistency seems to be a common theme. For this study, I am going to use Keefe's definition as a guideline as it takes into consideration the main dimensions of learning styles. However, they are not the only dimensions present in learning styles, and that there are many other possible options (James and Gardner, 1995:20). In addition, it is important to be aware that more recent notions of cognitive style and learning style have broadened considerably to the extent that there is a great deal of overlap. This will be discussed in the next section which explores in greater depth the three distinct but interconnected dimensions of learning styles, that is, cognitive styles, sensory/perceptual styles and affective styles. Physiological styles will not be discussed as it is not investigated in this study.

### 5.2.1 Cognitive styles

Research into cognitive styles includes explorations into differences in the manner of deployment of attention (scanning; focusing); in the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of categorising behaviour; in susceptibility to cognitive dissonance versus tolerance for the unusual or ambiguous; in the tendency to take risks or to be cautious. However, according to Willing (1988:41), when applied to teaching, many of these differences, and a number of other constructs (all usually conceived as polarities), have been crystallised into single bi-polar model of cognitive style, with scales running from simultaneous/synthetic to sequential/successive processing (Das et al., 1975); from holist to serialist (Pask, 1976a; 1976b); from impulsive-global to analytic-reflective (Zelincker and Jeffrey, 1976); and from holistic to analytical (Harnett, 1981). The formulation that has received the most research attention is the field dependence-field independence construct (Willing, 1988; Skehan, 1998) and for this reason, this is



the construct that is adopted for this study. As Berry (1981) pointed out, this particular construct is useful to understand the individual as a whole as it includes not only cognitive (intellectual or perceptual), but also some social and emotional characteristics. Besides, it takes into account the extent of autonomous functioning, that is the extent the individual relies on the external environment. However, individuals are not 'fixed' into a certain position and may vary their position according to situation.

Thus, it can be seen here that the conceptualisation of cognitive style has become much broader than was originally conceived, as it draws together perceptual, cognitive and social characteristics. In fact, over the years the field dependent/field independent (FD/FI) dimension has evolved tremendously. It started off by contrasting ways in which individuals established the upright in tests involving tilted frames or tilted rooms. It was theorised that more field-independent people tended to rely upon the external frame, while more dependent persons tended to rely upon the internal standard (Willing, 1988:42). More recently, it has evolved to the extent that the whole area of autonomy in social behaviour and interpersonal competencies has come to be included in the FD-FI cognitive style. The new theory proposes that those who are more field dependent tend to accept social influence more, and to be more competent in social relations; while those who are more field independent tend to be more independent of social influence, and to exhibit less social competence (Willing, 1988: 42). (See Appendix 5A for a contrast of the two poles of the field independent (analytical)/field dependent (concrete) dimension which takes into consideration these new developments).

In assessing FI/FD dispositions of learners, Skehan (1998:239) posited that the important thing to remember is that neither pole of the style dimension is regarded as 'better', but instead is simply seen to suggest alternatives, with each pole seen as having advantages for different tasks. For example, people belonging to the FI (analytical group) are likely to be more able to separate a problem into components, and then focus on the components which have significance for

decision making. This ability to separate the essential from the inessential would help them to focus on data that are relevant and avoid those that are irrelevant. Thus, in reading as well as listening, they would be at an advantage as they are more capable of extracting relevant information. In learning a language they will be at an advantage in learning the grammar rules, doing grammar exercises and remembering vocabulary items. But, due to their analytical nature, they are more likely to be more critical, aloof and not oriented towards people, with the result that their interpersonal skills will be less developed. This means they will have less opportunity to practise speaking when learning a second/foreign language, and thus, may lack communicative competence in that language.

In contrast, people belonging to the FD (also known as the concrete/holistic) group, are likely to be less analytical and more likely to perceive situations as a whole, and more likely to depend on external frames of reference for making judgements (e.g. by relying on other people's opinions). However, they are likely to be more sociable, person-oriented and warm which means that they will have lots of opportunity for social interactions where they are likely to receive good quality, relevant input and have the opportunity to use language to express personal meanings.

Studies carried out to find out whether there were any correlations between field independence and performance came up with mixed results. Naiman et al. (1978) found a significant correlation between field independence and performance on a French oral production test and on a French listening comprehension test. However, the correlations were not strong. Genessee and Hamayan (1980) also reported significant correlations between Embedded Figures Test (in which the subject has to find a target shape embedded in a more complex pattern) and performance on a general achievement test in French, and a listening comprehension test. Once again, the correlations were rather low. In contrast, Bialystok and Frohlich (1977) and Tucker et al. (1976) failed to find any correlations in the studies they carried out. Skehan (1989) drew the conclusion that "the relationship between FI and language learning success is, at best, weak,



and at worst, non-existent, in that the occasional significant correlations may involved a large component of chance" (p.13). This suggests that the FI/FD dispositions should not be viewed in terms of which is more conducive to language learning success per se as both dispositions are advantageous for different learners at certain times. However, I believe that an awareness of a learner's cognitive style, can enable a learner to make a more informed decision about suitable strategies for learning.

### 5.2.2 Sensory/Perceptual styles

This has frequently been classified under cognitive style. It refers to an individual's consistencies in relying upon the different sensory modalities available for experiencing the world (Messick, 1976:21). The three major sensory modes for interacting with the environment and organising information are the kinesthetic (leading to what has been sometimes called physical or motoric thinking), the visual (leading to figural or spatial thinking) and the auditory (leading to verbal thinking). Research has shown that although in adults all three modalities can function in parallel, individuals differ markedly in their preferred reliance upon one or another of these three sensory modes (Some of the earlier research included that by Bartlett, 1932; Birch and Lefford, 1963, 1967; Bissell et.al, 1971; Bruner et al. 1956; Roe, 1951, 1953; Smith, 1964; Sperry, 1973). More recently, there has been much research on the relationship between sensory preferences and variations in learning proficiency and it is found that in some context, the preferred or favoured sense may not be necessarily the one which most efficiently receives or processes information (Willing, 1988: 54).

Reid (1987) was one of the first researchers who focused on sensory mode preference when investigating the learning style preferences of ESL students. She developed the Perceptual Learning Style Preference survey (PLSPS) which comprises a questionnaire that allows ESL students to self-identify their preferred perceptual learning styles from six categories: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual learning. Since her investigation, many teacher-

researchers have used her PLSPS to help their students identify their individual perceptual learning styles. Her study revealed that:

- most ESL students studying English in the United States showed strong major learning style preferences for kinesthetic and tactile learning.
- most ESL students showed a negative learning style for group learning (that is, they preferred not to learn that way).
- ESL students from different language/cultural backgrounds often differed significantly in their choices of major, minor, and negative learning styles.
- ESL students from specific major fields often preferred specific learning styles (for example, engineering students preferred tactile learning, and students in hard sciences preferred visual learning).
- ESL students whose stay in the United States was prolonged adapted their perceptual learning styles to the educational culture in which they were studying.

She also looked into the influence of cultural background on learning style preferences. Some of the prominent findings on cultural background influences on learning style preferences are: Western students showed a general preference for visual style (Reid, 1987). Asian students also preferred visual style (Reid, 1987), especially Koreans (Erhman and Oxford, 1995 cited in Cheng and Banya, 1998:81). Oxford (1995 cited in Cheng and Banya, 1998:81) found Hispanics to frequently prefer auditory style, but Reid (1987) found them to prefer kinesthetic and tactile styles, whereas Mata Vicioso (1993 cited in Reid et al., 1998:21) found them to prefer kinesthetic but not tactile style. As for the other non-westerners, Oxford (1992 cited in Cheng and Banya, 1998:81) found them to predominantly prefer kinesthetic and tactile styles. Reid (1987), however, found some variation with Indonesians preferring auditory and kinesthetic styles, and Arabic learners (including Egyptians) choosing all four styles. Reid in a another study (1992 cited in Reid et al., 1998:21), found the Egyptians not opting for an auditory style.



Thus, it appears that there is no conclusive evidence that cultural or ethnic background determines learning style. Willing (1988) confirmed this view in his study of immigrants' learning styles in Australia. Instead, we can probably say that learning style components vary across cultures since they relate to individual differences, rather than cultural or social group differences. What is affected by cultural and social background is a learner's choice of strategies and learning habits. In view of this, for the purposes of this study, I have decided not to consider the influence of cultural background on learning styles on second language learning, although I acknowledge that there is research that suggested the importance of attending to students' cultural learning styles (see for e.g. Nelson, 1995; Vogt et al. 1987; Phillips, 1983).

To my best knowledge, there is only one study on the perceptual learning styles of distance learners. Oxford et al. (1993), in their study on American high school students learning Japanese as a foreign language via satellite, predicted that the key styles relevant to distance education by satellite were sensory preferences i.e. visual vs. auditory vs. hands-on or haptic (tactile and kinesthetic). Their findings supported their prediction. They found that although auditory students were more motivated than visual students, nevertheless visual students significantly outperformed auditory students and hands-on (tactile/kinesthetic) students in achievement. Her findings suggested that visual learners would be more successful at learning a foreign language via satellite. Does that mean that visual learners are in general more successful at learning a second/foreign language at a distance? I do not believe so. Learning a language involves not only the perceptual senses (as shown by Willing (1988) in his psychological model of language learning in Fig 5.4). To undertake a through investigation of learning styles, other cognitive factors and personality factors have to be taken into consideration. Willing's psychological model of learning styles takes into account the major factors involved. Thus, in this study his questionnaire and his model of learning styles will be adopted.

### 5.2.3 Affective styles

The 'affective domain' refers to the emotional side of human behaviour, and it may, thus, be contrasted with the concept of cognitive style. The development of affective states or feelings involves a variety of personality factors as well as feelings, both about ourselves and about others with whom we come into contact. It includes feelings of self-esteem, fear, respect for authority, need for status and comfort, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy and motivation, (Smith, 1982; Ferro, 1993 ; Brown, 1987).

Willing (1988:54) pointed out that it is important to distinguish between affective factors influencing the person's level of achievement, and those same factors considered as components of style. He further added that there is a bias towards research focusing on the former. Some of these studies include Gardner and Lambert's study (1985) and Gardner (1985) focusing on instrumental and integrative motivation in relation to the development of proficiency; Naiman et al.'s study (1975) on anxiety in relation to test performance and speaking ability; Busch's study (1982) on self image and introversion/extroversion; Guioro's study (1972) on empathy; and Naiman et al.'s study (1975) on attitude as indicators or predictors of achievement. Willing strongly felt that there was a need for the integration of basic data from personality psychology into a learning style model and in his opinion Kolb's model came closest to this. This led to his decision to base his FI/FD construct on Kolb's model.

As I mentioned earlier Willing's model takes into consideration the psychological factors determining learning styles and hence is the most appropriate for this study. In addition, in my survey of literature I have not been able to come up with a better learning style model than his. As discussed earlier, Reid's PLSP survey focuses only on perceptual learning styles, and thus is insufficient for the purpose of this study. Ehrman (1998) suggested working with a combination of instruments to assess FI and Field sensitivity in the field of language learning, which included the Modern Language Aptitude Test (Caroll and Sapon, 1959),



the Hartmann Boundary Questionnaire (Hartmann, 1991), the Myers-Briggs Type indicator (Myers and McCaulley, 1985) and the Motivation and Strategies Questionnaire (Ehrman, 1996). In my opinion, Ehrmans' approach lacks a fundamental, underlying, theoretical unity. Thus, it appears that Willing's questionnaire and model are still most appropriate for this study. In the next section, I will consider Willing's theoretical construct, his questionnaire, his psychological model of learning styles and his research study in depth to provide the necessary theoretical background to my own study.

### **5.3 Willing's study (1988) on learning styles**

Willing developed his questionnaire for his study on learning styles of adult migrants in Australia learning English as L2. However, only part of his questionnaire was adopted for this study. The reasons for adopting only part of his questionnaire will be explained later in the section.

#### **5.3.1 Description of Willing's construct**

Willing's learning style construct drew upon the work of Witkin and Goodenough (1981), and Kolb's (1976) learning style model. He described his construct as following Witkin and Goodenough's (1981) conceptualisation: autonomy of external referents in perceptual and social behaviour. He described it as:

(Having) two indicators or components which are termed 'restructuring skills' and 'limited interpersonal competencies'. The field independent-dependent cognitive style is thus a pervasive dimension of individual functioning, showing itself in the perceptual, intellectual, personality and social domains (Witkin and Goodenough, 1981), and tends to be relatively stable over time and across situations. It involves individual differences

in process rather than content variables; that is to say, it refers to individual differences in the 'how' rather than the 'what' of behaviour (Witkin and Goodenough, 1981). Since it refers to the how of one's behaviour, the field dependence-independence construct avoids some of the difficulties of the 'ability' approach, where the focus is on the 'how much'.

(Willing, 1988: 43)

Willing (1988) further drew upon Kolb's (1976) model (which is given in Fig.5.1) to conceptualise his construct.



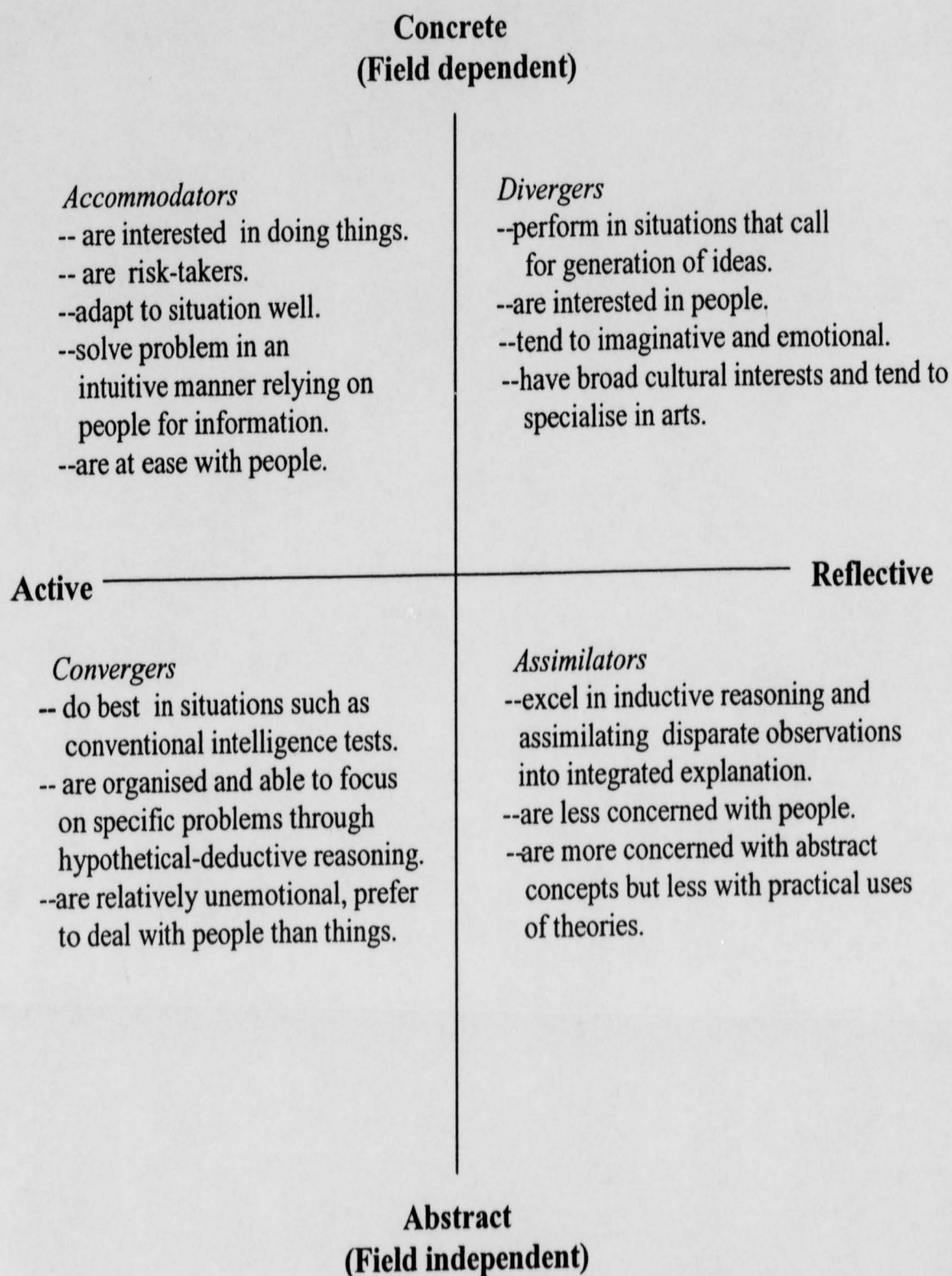


Fig. 5.1 Kolb's learning style model (taken from Smith and Kolb, 1985:14)

Willing (1988:69) liked Kolb's model because he believed it has the capacity to predict, to some degree, actual learning style configurations of a large sample of ESL learners. However, he found Kolb's instrument, which consists of a list of single-word personality descriptions (e.g. 'accepting', 'thinking', 'reserved', 'evaluative', 'pragmatic', 'receptive', 'watching', 'rational', 'practical' etc.) unsuitable for his purpose because of the difficulty of the English vocabulary involved. Personally, I feel its unsuitability goes beyond difficulty of vocabulary involved. It also involves difficulty in assuring uniformity of interpretations of the meanings of the descriptors by learners

He further described Kolb's as an interaction between two dimensions which he interpreted as: (a) cognitive style and (b) all other personality factors, grouped into a single scale (Willing, 1988:68). He considered the Kolb's abstract-concrete dimensions as a scale that closely resembles the FD/FI continuum. He equated Kolb's **abstract conceptualisation** to an 'analytical' style of cognition and his **concrete experience** to the holistic, direct, relatively undifferentiating style of cognition. He suggested that Kolb's other dimension of **active versus reflective** would correspond to a personality factor of active versus passive. He surmised that this scale could be used to summarise a number of different personality constructs, such as introversion/extraversion, autonomous/dependent, and the like (Willing, 1988:68-69). Based on his empirical study with learners of English within the Adult Migrant Service in Australia, he was able to come up with four principal 'factors' using factor analysis. He labelled them as 'analytical', 'authority-oriented', 'communicative' and 'concrete' learners. Skehan proposed that Willing's model could be represented on a two-dimensional framework but, in my opinion, Skehan's interpretation (see Fig.5.2) does not give an accurate representation of the Willing's four principal factors.



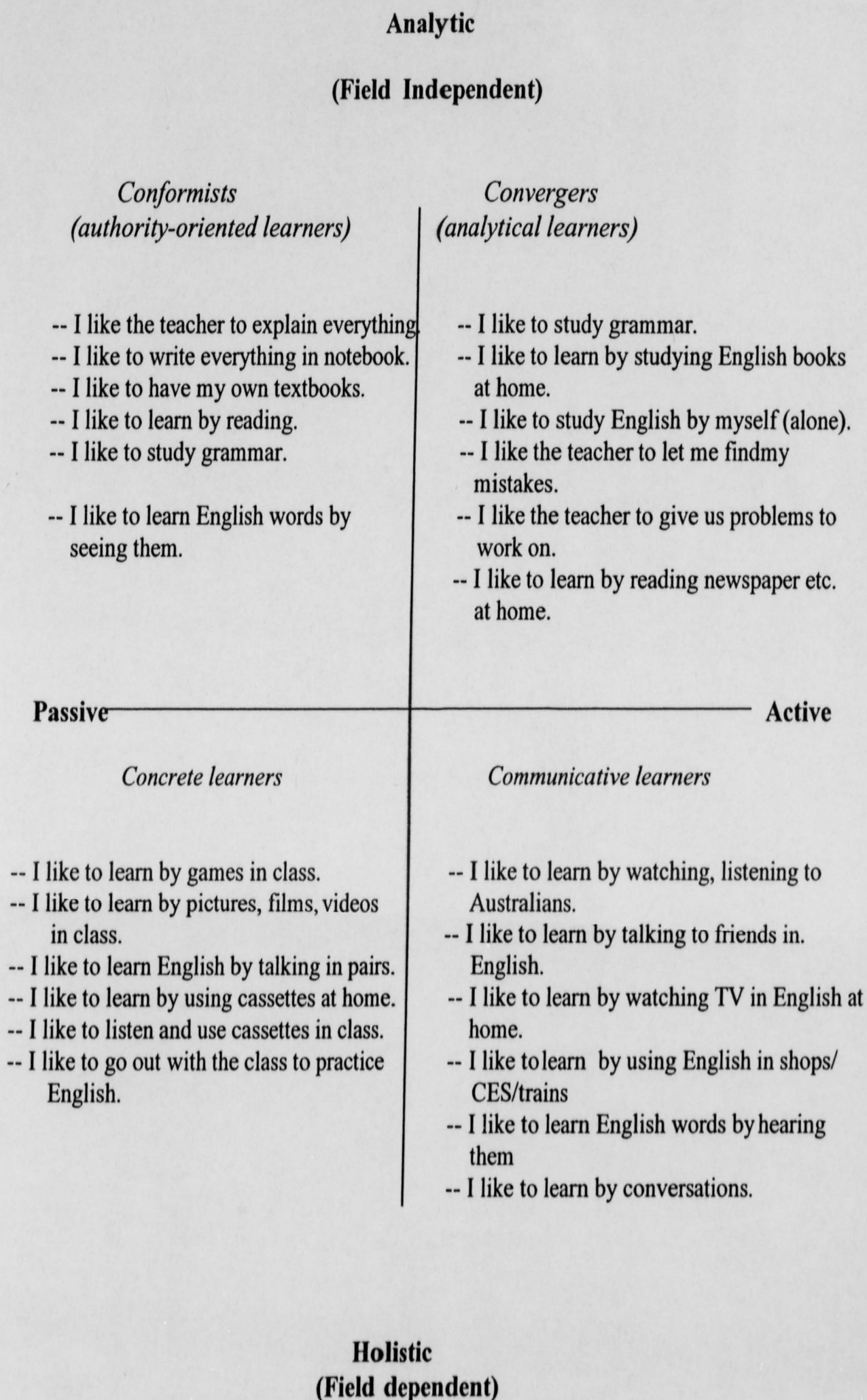


Fig. 5.2 Skehan's interpretation of Willing's two dimensional framework of learning style (Skehan, 1998:247 and Willing, 1988:156,158,160,162)

Willing described the 'Communicative' group and the 'Authority-oriented' group as being 'crossed' types. According to him, the 'communicative' group includes "many people who in fact have a field independent tendency, but who indicate a desire for a communicative and social learning approach, probably because they feel that this would be most useful for their needs in relation to language learning" (p. 159). As for the 'Authority-oriented' type, he posited that:

(although) the biographical variables suggest that a significant proportion of the structure-seeking, Authority-oriented' type probably actually come from that segment of the population which tends by nature to be field dependent. Because cognitively these people are probably not predisposed to actively organise information, they probably perceive that they need the teacher's direction in the provision of explanations, patterns to follow.

(Willing, 1988:159-161)

Based on the above description, I would like to suggest that it is inappropriate to place Willing's 'Communicative' group under the 'field dependent/active' quadrant and his 'Authority-oriented' group under the 'field independent/passive' quadrant, as Skehan has done. In my view, Fig. 5.3 is a more accurate representation of Willing's framework



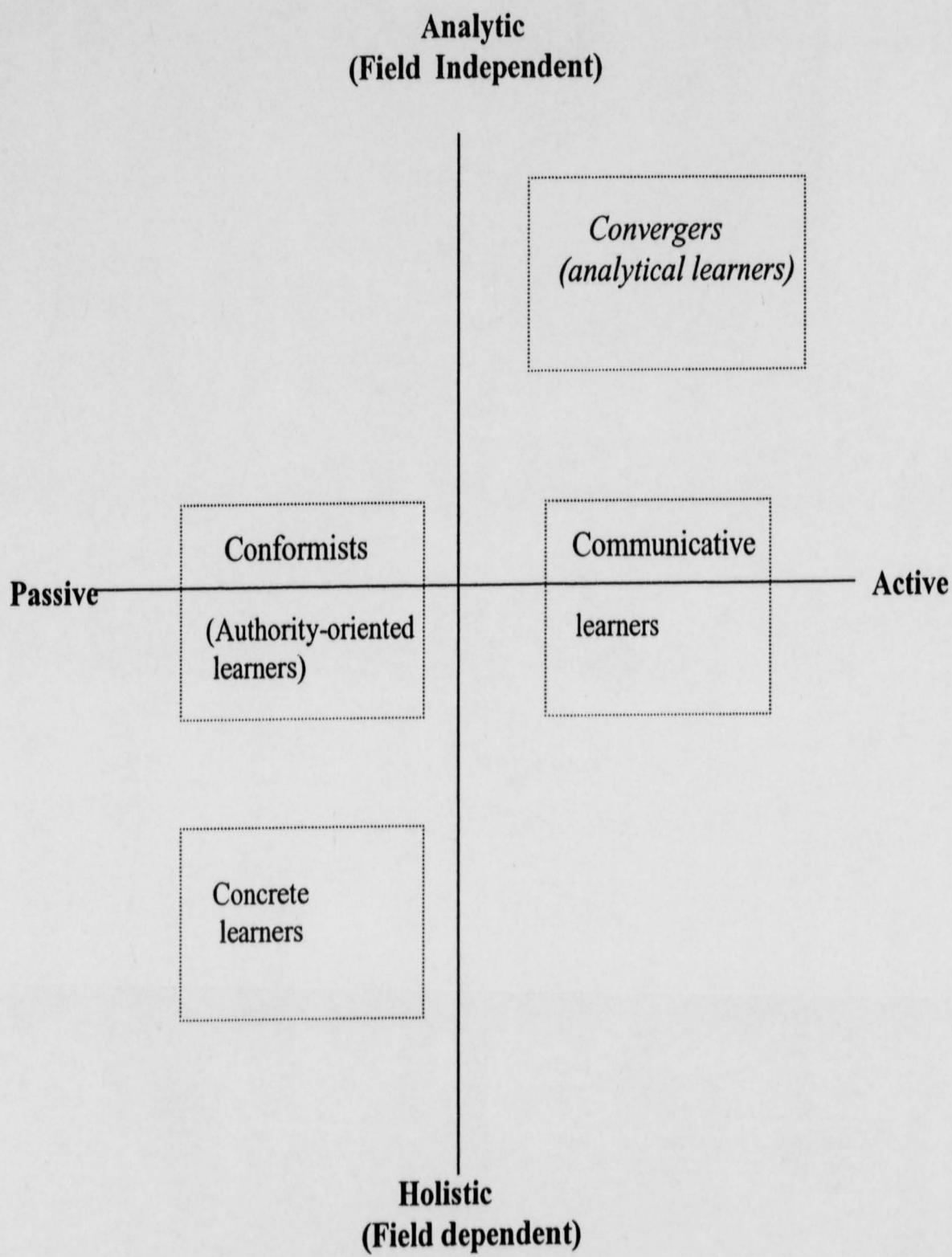


Fig. 5.3 My interpretation of Willing's framework of learning style

I agree with Skehan (1998:249) that these sketches of the four learner types, are not representative of 'real people' in the sense that most learners do not fall neatly into a specific quadrant but then, as shown by Willing (and other researchers too), learners do manifest certain groups of characteristics more than others, and thus it is reasonable to describe learners as belonging to a particular category. By doing so, it will enable us to make reasonable predictions of learners' performances under certain conditions. Take for example in the context of distance learning, it is reasonable to assume that 'analytical' learners will perform better because they possess qualities appropriate for this context, such as independence and ability to work well on their own. On the other hand, 'authority-oriented' learners may find it difficult to learn through this mode as they will miss the constant attention of an authority figure.

Next, I will consider Willing's psychological model of learning style differences (1988:59-62)(see Fig. 5.4) which illustrates in a schematic and simplified way the various cognitive factors and personality factors that interact to result in particular styles of language learning. As mentioned earlier, I am adopting this model for my study, thus it is worthwhile for me to review it in depth. This model, which renders in visual terms the basic structure of assumptions underlying most current thinking on learning style, presents learning as consisting of three phases: an input phase (Receiving), the internal processing of this input data (Processing), and then the consequent output (Using). In 'Receiving', there is the first language input/real experience which is carried along perceptual nerves from all the five senses. In the diagram, the multiple 'shafts' on a single arrow are to convey that several alternative modalities are involved and that among these alternatives one or a combination of elements may be favoured by the individual.

The next arrow on the diagram shows that as soon as sense data is taken in, it is immediately run through the 'filter' of the whole personality. The basic personality variables and the ways of describing them are infinitely complex but they can be reduced to a finite number of dimensions. A few of these dimensions are indicated in the diagram. In a learning situation, a person may display



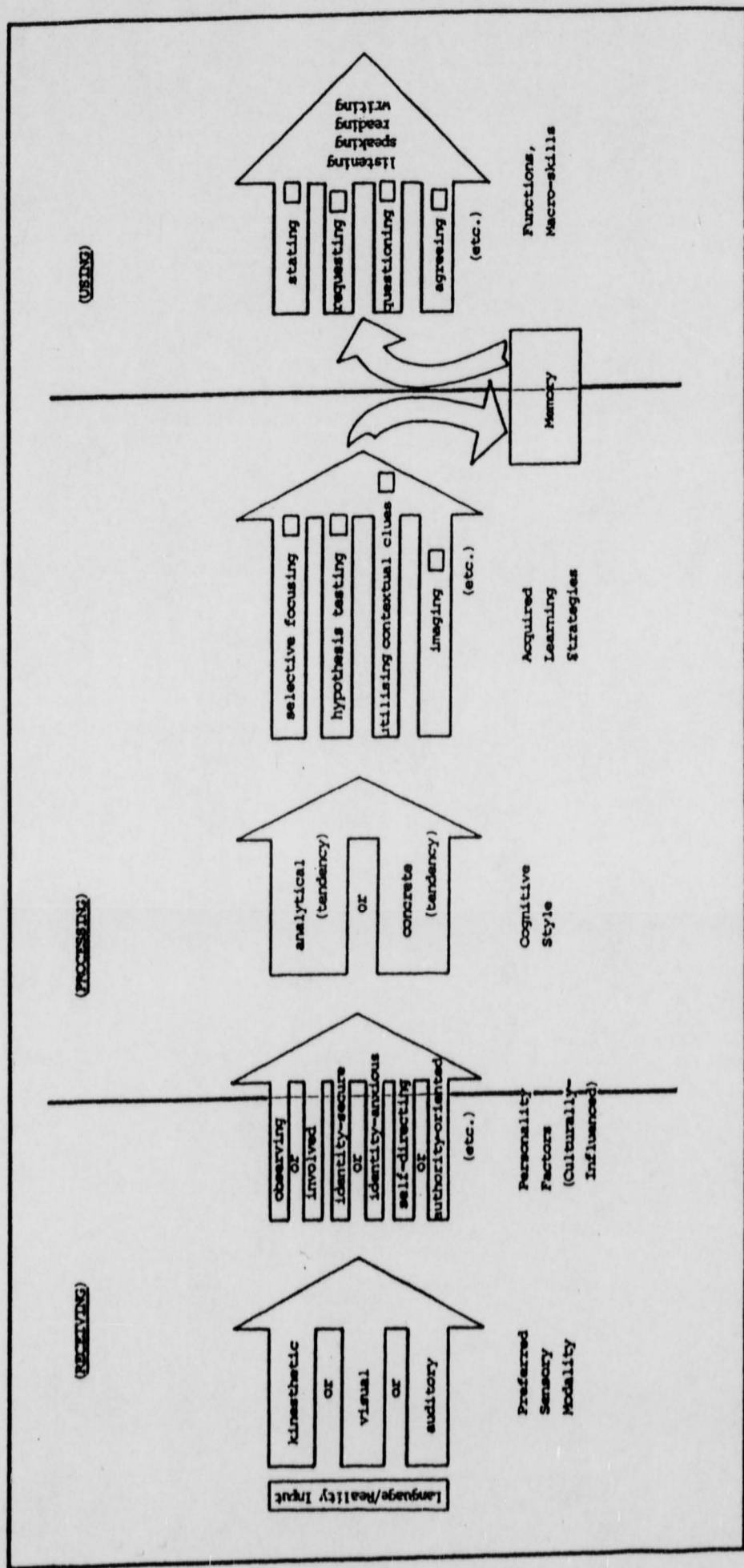


Fig. 5.4 Willing's psychological model of learning style differences

various personality characteristics. For example, he/she may be observing in the background, or anxious and uncertain about his/her identity, or self-starting and self-directing, or wanting to be teacher-dependent and authority oriented.

From the diagram, it can be seen that the personality variables overlap 'Receiving' and 'Processing'. This is to draw attention to the fact that the personality not only colours the way information is processed, but it also determines the way information is sought and collected in the first place. Thus, 'learning style' implies definite preferences about the way learning material is most effectively presented.

Cognitive style is depicted as lying entirely within the phase of Processing. This is an area that happens 'inside the head'. This area is responsible for the contrast between an 'analytical' and a 'concrete' tendency.

His next arrow shows the more detailed aspects of mental processing. Learning strategies are described as a sort of filing system used by an individual for the following purposes: (1) to focus on, handle, organise, classify, make association, and so on; (2) to assimilate, digest or store information and experience in general; (3) to retrieve information when it is needed.

The third phase is described as being responsible for the retrieval of information from memory and for putting into action in the performance of whatever language function required by the situation. Typical examples of the functions are: 'stating', 'requesting', 'questioning', 'agreeing' and so on. Such uses are expressed through various channels which are available: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The various options in the different phases all interact. For example, a visual preference might be combined with an identity-anxious personality structure, an analytical cognitive tendency, and a preference for a specific set of highly structure-seeking strategies. Many combinations and permutations are theoretical possible but research has shown that some of these



characteristics have the tendency to appear together. The net result of the interaction of all these factors is then the basic **learning**.

### 5.3.2 Description of Willing's questionnaire

Willing (1988) designed a questionnaire comprising 45 items for the following purposes: (1) to collect information in six areas of possible individual learning-mode preferences (Questions 1-30) and (2) to gather information, not in terms of likes and dislikes, but in terms of how often, in the learner's estimation, he/she used a given strategy (Questions 31-45).

The questions on individual learning-mode preferences or learning style preferences (i.e. Questions 1-30) belong to the following six categories:

- (1) different sorts of ('classroom') activities (Questions 1 to 7);
- (2) different modes of teacher behaviour (Questions 8 to 12);
- (3) different ways of being grouped for learning activities (Questions 13 to 17);
- (4) different aspects of language which need emphasis (Questions 18 to 20);
- (5) different sensory-modality preferences (Questions 21 to 23);
- (6) different modes of learning on one's own outside class (24 to 30);

(Willing, 1988:101)

These questions were not chosen to test predictions about particular learning preference in isolation. Instead, a fundamental hypothesis underlay the choice of options types within each general area. The hypothesis was based on the cognitive style construct of FI/FD, which involved a continuum running from a 'concrete' to an 'analytical' learning style (as described earlier). For each area, activities were included which ranged from highly concrete to highly analytical. The fundamental hypothesis was that the response of a particular learner would show a pattern of higher preference, whether for the 'concrete-type' options in each area, or for the analytical-type options. In view of that, it was necessary to

construct within each learning preference group questions that included various alternatives along that scale.

For the purpose of analysis, he adopted the 'null' hypothesis for all the questions. That is to say, the formal procedure was to assume that unless reliable and sizeable evidence to the contrary was found, any variable 'A' would be taken to be unrelated to any variable 'B'.

He considered the questions on learning strategies as a discussion-starter rather than a self-contained survey because he doubted the reliability of learners' responses to these questions. He pointed out that most learners would not use many of the proposed strategies very often and that they would not be very conscious of using them even if they did. He recommended that these questions be used for the researchers or interpreters to talk about general issues of styles and strategies with learners and gather some further data in this way.

In his selection of biography details to use as variables, in most cases, he also depended upon the FI/FD construct. He referred to previous research on cultural background and cognitive style to decide on the items to include. For example he included items asking :

- where the person goes to school in his own country because research shows that learners from rural background favour concrete learning modes whereas city dwellers exhibit more analytical preferences.
- about family size because research shows that people from a large family tend to be field dependent and vice versa.

Willing's questionnaire items followed the style used by Dunn and Dunn (see Dunn's learning style inventory, 1975:64). This consisted of a simple statement, phrased in the first person, with which the learner may then agree or disagree. However, instead of a simple yes/no or true/false response,



Willing offered his subjects a greater choice. For questions 1 through 30 he used 'No', 'A little', 'Good', and 'Best' as possible responses to each probe and for questions 31 through 45 he used 'no', 'sometimes' and 'often' (see Appendix 5A for a copy of Willing's questionnaire). In order to make the questionnaire accessible to learners with minimal English, Willing phrased it as concisely and as simply as possible eliminating jargon such as 'role-plays', 'dialogue', 'cloze', 'phonetics', 'maze', 'errors' and 'audio-visual'. He acknowledged that this makes some test probes somewhat obscure. To ensure the reliability of his questionnaire, he administered it in contexts which allowed oral explanations and clarification.

### 5.3.3 Description of his methods of analysing data

The first tool he used was descriptive statistics. He assigned the value 1 to the response 'No', 2 for 'A little', 3 for 'Good', and 4 for 'Best' for the learning preferences questions (1-30). An average level of 'preference' was calculated, based on all 517 respondents. Based on the results he was able to establish an overall hierarchy of simple preference for the various learning modalities and discussed learners' modality preferences.

In addition, he also examined departures from averages based on the following characteristics of respondents.

- Ethnic group
- Age group
- Sex
- Level of previous education
- Length of residence in Australia
- Speaking proficiency level
- AMES (Adult Migration Education System) programme

He discussed the interaction of biographical variables upon the response of a particular question. For example, if the Arabic speakers in AMES (adult Migrants Education Service) rated Q.16 ('learning with the whole class') more highly than the general AMES average for that question and if the oldest group of

AMES clients (of all nationalities) was found to rate Q. 16 more highly than the other age groups, then it would be reasonably safe in predicting that persons who are both Arabic-speaking and elderly will tend to mark the question even higher. He, however, did not make statistically valid cross-comparisons relating a question to more than one personal variable at a time

The second statistical tool he employed was 'factor analysis'. This method allowed him to look for sets of responses which have a high correlation with each other. The procedure involved was purely mathematical, that is, there was no preconceived pattern which the analysis was attempting to find. Instead, it sorted through the possible combinations or responses across all cases studied in order to discover whether there were any combinations of questions whose response-levels consistently tended to move in parallel. If such a set or sets were discovered in the data for this survey, it would then be necessary to examine the particular issues involved, in order to see whether those sets appeared to have any coherent 'meaning' in recognisable cognitive style or learning style terms. Willing described the logic behind using this process as follows:

If sets of closely correlating questions were discovered, it would indicate that there were certain learning orientations or syndromes or styles, each possessing an underlying meaning of its own. If those meanings appeared to resemble the FD/FI construct, the basic survey hypothesis would be confirmed; if they did not resemble that construct, then the hypothesis would have to be rejected.

(Willing, 1988:153)

Finally, he used a rank-ordering method to analyse the data on learning strategies.

### 5.3.4 General results of his study

First, Willing used descriptive statistics to analyse learners' modality preferences (see Appendix 5B for rank order of questions/items according to average level of response). His findings seemed to suggest that the learners preferred a more



communicative approach involving more interactions but at the same time liked to be taught grammatical rules and pronunciation, and be guided by teachers. However, the 'artificial' side of the communicative approach, such as listening activities, activities involving pictures, films and videos and especially games were all unpopular. However, it is possible to interpret the data in many other ways. As Willing suggested, an indication of preference could also be read as an indication of perceived needs. Thus, it can be seen here that descriptive statistics are not able to offer any conclusive indications of learning style preferences.

Willing did not attempt to attribute learning styles to single probes although he could very well have used a FD/FI criterion for each item. For example, FI could be assumed to underlie Item 1 (favouring reading as a class activity) and he could assume that an individual's high response to Item 1 to indicate FI and low response to indicate FD. The reason was that he felt that there was insufficient evidence to attribute an entire cognitive/learning style to single probes (I support this decision wholeheartedly). Instead he used 'factor analysis' to look for sets of responses which had high correlation with each other. Each of this set could be viewed as a complex set of attitudes and approaches based on underlying/psychological orientation of the person and would constitute a cognitive or learning style.

He was able to identify four principal 'factors' in the data. He described them as constituting four different learning styles: 'concrete' learning style; 'analytical/converge' learning style; 'communicative' learning style; and 'authority-oriented/conformist' learning style. See Fig.5.2 and 5.3 for diagrammatic representations of Willing's framework of learning styles and characteristics of the different learning styles.

Using the six questions in each set as criteria and the following mathematical procedure, he further divided the survey population into four groups, according to relevant learning style:

Each subject's responses to the six criterion questions in each set were coded as numbers (1,2,3,4) and these were added up to yield a numerical total, for each set. The set which yielded the highest total was then considered to be the predominant style for that person. The person was then placed in the type of learning style group which was defined by that set of questions. The characteristics of the members of each 'group' were then studied statistically.

(Willing, 1988:154-155)

Using this method, he found that the 'Concrete' and 'Analytical' groups only account for about ten per cent each, of the AMES student population. The first 'crossed' type ('Communicative') actually constituted approximately forty per cent of the total population, while the 'Authority-oriented' group accounted for a further thirty percent. The remaining ten percent was 'mixed'.

The results derived from his biographical variables and 'learning strategies' will not be discussed here as these variables were not included in my 'How do you learn' questionnaire. Admittedly, useful results could have been obtained if I had included the 'biographical variables' aspect of the questionnaire, but, in view of the fact that my research does not extend to the exploration of cultural, gender, social and age-related issues, it is not necessary to discuss his findings on them. In leaving them out of this thesis, I am not suggesting that they are not pertinent to second language learning, it is just that it is not possible to explore all these areas within the scope of this thesis. So, I am confining my discussion to only issues relevant to this thesis.

The decision to exclude the 'learning strategies' section of Willing's questionnaire was a more difficult one to make as learning strategies are also part and parcel of a person's learning processes and thus, an exploration of them would not go beyond the scope of this thesis. However, Willing's admission that there was a lack of reliability of responses to questions on learning strategies sowed the seeds of doubts in my mind with regard to whether to include learning strategies or not. Besides, I found Willing's section of learning strategies



inadequate for a thorough investigation of learning strategies. SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) designed by Oxford (1990) looked promising as a replacement, but it is very lengthy as it covers a whole range of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, affective, social, and memory. The following reasons led me to decide to exclude questions on learning strategies completely:

- If I were to include SILL, the whole questionnaire (including those in Study Two and Three) would be so long that the students would be put off completely about responding to it.
- Certain questions in SILL overlap or/and are interconnected with questions in the New Approaches to Studying inventory (NASI) in Study Two. Thus, if I decided to use SILL as well, I would have to eliminate some questions (either from SILL or NASI). In doing so, the validity of both questionnaires could be jeopardised.
- Language learning strategies are specific behaviours that students use to enhance their language learning and can vary from task to task. Thus, in my opinion, asking learners to identify the strategies they use without referring to the tasks concerned, will not yield reliable responses (despite literature that claims otherwise).
- Language learning strategies are not permanent and vary from situation to situation, thus, in my view, its usefulness towards model/strategy building (which is the primary aim of this thesis) is limited.

### 5.3.5 Overall Conclusion

Using factor analysis, Willing was able to identify four 'factors' from his research study. He described them as constituting four different learning styles: 'concrete' learning style; 'analytical/converge' learning style; 'communicative' learning style and 'authority-oriented/conformist' learning style. In the next chapter, I am going to describe a study undertaken using Willing's questionnaire to identify Malaysian ESL learners' **conceptions** of their learning styles in learning English. In my opinion, it is more appropriate to use the term '**conceptions** of learning

styles' than just 'learning styles' since we are asking students' to identify their own learning styles through a questionnaire. One of the purposes of the study is to find out whether the learning styles identified coincide with those of Willing's. The specific research questions that the study addresses, and the analysis and discussion of the results derived from the data will be presented in the next chapter.



# CHAPTER 6

## Study One

### Conceptions of learning styles in learning English: Focusing on the data

#### 6.1 Introduction

This study investigates the conceptions of learning styles of Malaysian ESL learners in learning English. Willing's learning style questionnaire is utilised for this purpose. However, the section of the questionnaire on learning strategies is not included. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first describes the research design of this study and the second, the analysis of data. The data will be analysed quantitatively with the use of the SPSS (9.0) package, and this will be accompanied by relevant discussions of results. Finally, the implications of the findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context will be discussed.

## 6.2 Research design

### 6.2.1 Research questions

The study seeks answers to the following research questions:

- (1) Are the Malaysian ESL distance learners' conceptions of their learning styles in learning English different from those of the Malaysian ESL on-campus learners and, if yes, in what ways?
- (2) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **distance learners'** conceptions of their learning styles in learning English different from each other and, if yes, in what ways?
  - (i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.
- (3) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **on-campus learners'** conceptions of their learning styles in learning English different from each other and, if yes, in what ways?
  - (i) Low Proficiency (Lo), Average Proficiency (Av), and High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (SocSc), Applied Science (ApplSc), and Business Administration (BusAdm) students.
- (4) Are there any differences between (2) and (3)? If so, what are they?
- (5) What are the implications of the above findings for the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context?



### 6.2.2 Research instrument

Questionnaires and interviews were used in the collection of data for this thesis. A point to note right from the start is that the questionnaires were translated into Bahasa Malaysian (the Malay Language) to avoid subjects' failure to respond appropriately due to difficulty in comprehending the questions. The questionnaire was translated by me and vetted by a colleague who has a diploma in translation. The questionnaire was then piloted on a group of 23 on-campus UKM students and corrected based on their comments. As for the interviews, they were carried out in English, but subjects were allowed to express their views in Malay, if they so desired. The interview format was piloted on three UKM on-campus students, and the format and method of questioning revised based on feedback from the interviewees and a colleague who listened to the tapes. Only one type of instrument, i.e., the questionnaire, was used in Study One and Two, whereas both questionnaire and interview were used in Study Three. The questionnaire for the three studies was named '**Understanding of Students' Learning and Perceptions of Courses Questionnaire**' (USLPCQ). It comprises three sub-questionnaires. See Fig. 6.1 for the format of USLPCQ, and Appendix 6A for a copy of the USLPCQ. (A Malay version of the questionnaire is also included.)

Section	Purpose	Source
1. Introductory section	to elicit information on the subjects.	The format and contents of this section were not taken from any specific questionnaire. Instead, they were based on the overall needs of this study.
2. <b>Sub-questionnaire 1:</b> "How do you learn English?"	to investigate Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning styles in learning English.	adapted from Willing's "How do you learn best?" questionnaire (1988).
3. <b>Sub-questionnaire 2:</b> New Approaches to Studying Inventory	to investigate Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying in general (i.e., in studying all subjects).	adapted from Entwistle and Tait's Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (1994) and Entwistle and Ramsden's original Approaches to Studying Inventory (1983).
4. <b>Sub-questionnaire 3:</b> New Course Perceptions Questionnaire	to investigate Malaysian ESL learners' perceptions of their English Proficiency Courses.	adapted from Entwistle and Ramsden's Course Perceptions Questionnaire (1983).

Fig. 6.1 Format of the USLPCQ

In the next section, I will describe the first sub-questionnaire as only this is relevant to this study. Sub-questionnaire 2 will be described in Chapter 8 and sub-questionnaire 3, in Chapter 9.

### The "How Do You Learn English?" Questionnaire

This questionnaire comprised the first 30 items on learning styles of Willing's questionnaire, with some modifications to render it more appropriate for this study (see section 5.3.2 for a breakdown of the areas covered by the questionnaire). A modification was first made to the responses provided by Willing because they appeared rather awkward. Question 1, for example was, "In



English class, I like to learn by reading" and the responses given were 'no', 'a little', 'good' and 'best'. The first two responses were acceptable but the third and fourth appeared inappropriate to the questions asked. The same applied to questions 2 to 30. The responses appeared equally awkward when translated to Malay. I decided to change the responses to 4 for "strongly agree", 3 for "agree", 2 for "disagree" and 1 for "strongly disagree".

Willing avoided the use of a numerical scale (e.g. a scale of 1 to 4) as responses because his experiment on adult migrant learners showed that some of them were incapable of reliably ranking their responses in an abstract manner. In my case, I had no such worry as my sample population comprised university students, accustomed to using numbers and other abstract tools in questionnaires. In my questionnaire, the scale numbering 1, 2, 3 and 4 was used, accompanied by an introductory paragraph explaining what the numbers meant.

All Willing's questions except two were used (i.e., questions 7 and 45). Besides, questions, that appeared somewhat obscure were modified. Since I was converting the USLPCQ into Bahasa Malaysia, I did not have to worry about learners not understanding the questions due to lack of proficiency in English. However, I had to ensure that the translated items conveyed the same meanings as the original version. Oller (1979) pointed out that this is not an easy task as it involves "maintaining roughly the same style level, the same frequency of usage of vocabulary and idioms, comparable phrasing and reference complexities" (p.90). Eliason (1995) advised that "at the very least, a translator (of learning style instruments) must be knowledgeable in the field of education, and ideally, in learning styles, to capture the essence of the original"(p.22). I have the necessary qualifications but to increase the 'accuracy' of the translation, I enlisted the help of a colleague who is a TESL specialist. She also has a diploma in translation. Besides, I also carried out a trial run on the translated items. (See Appendix 6B for more information regarding the revisions made).

### 6.2.3 Sample population

Initially, I intended to use only first-year students who had just taken their first English Proficiency Courses (EPCs) to respond to the USLPCQs. This was not problematic in the case of on-campus students but, in the case of the distance learners, the situation was more complicated than I anticipated. It was not possible to get a sufficient number of first-year distance learners that met the criteria due to the following reasons: (1) for certain faculties, EPCs were not offered until the second year, and (2) there were cases of distance learners who decided to sign up for the EPCs only in their second year. In view of that, I decided to distribute the questionnaires to all first- and second-year distance learners who had just taken their first EPCs. In the case of on-campus learners, the questionnaires were distributed to only first-year first semester students, as this was the group comprising the most number of students taking the designated EPCs for the first time. The subjects were taken from three faculties of the UKM, i.e., Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Applied Sciences, and Faculty of Business Administration. Category I comprised Low Proficiency Learners who had taken VG 1023, i.e., the Elementary level English Proficiency course. These were students who obtained Credit 5, Credit 6, Pass 7, Pass 8 and Fail 9 in their SPM. Category II comprised Average Proficiency learners who had taken VG1033, i.e., the Intermediate level English Proficiency course. These were students who obtained Credits 3 and 4 in their SPM. Category III comprised High Proficiency learners who had taken one of the following English for Special Purposes (ESP) courses i.e., VG2013: English for Social Sciences, VG 2113: English for Applied Sciences or VG 2123: English for Business. These were students who obtained Distinctions 1 and 2 in their SPM. Fig.6.2 presents a breakdown of subjects according to categories, and Fig. 6.3 presents a breakdown of subjects according to their home states and age-groups.



Mode of learning	Faculty	Proficiency Level
Mode 1: Distance Learners	Type 1: Social Sciences	Low(1)
		Average(2)
		High(3)
	Type 2: Applied Sciences	Low(1)
		Average(2)
		High(3)
	Type 3: Business Administration	Low(1)
		Average(2)
		High(3)
Mode 2: On-campus Learners	Type 1: Social Sciences	Low(1)
		Average(2)
		High(3)
	Type 2: Applied Sciences	Low(1)
		Average(2)
		High(3)
	Type 3: Business Administration	Low(1)
		Average(2)
		High(3)

Fig. 6.2 Breakdown of subjects according to categories

Home state	Age-groups								Total
	23 & below		24-30		31-40		40 & above		
	DL	OCL	DL	OCL	DL	OCL	DL	OCL	
W.Persekutuan		17	21		8		3		49
Selangor		57	23		15	3	4		102
Malacca		24	8		12		3		47
N.Sembilan		20	12		5		1		38
Perak		25	3		1		2		31
Penang	1	17	13		8				39
Kedah	1	11	2		3	1			18
Perlis		1	1						2
Johor	1	39	27		19	2	1		89
Kelantan		43	14		15	2	4		78
Trengganu		39	4						43
Pahang	3	33	29	2	5	3	2		77
Sabah		9	37		12				58
Sarawak		5	10		13	1	1		30
								</	

Fig. 6.3 Breakdown of subjects according to their home states and age-groups

Only 93.5% of the students (i.e., 701 students) supplied information regarding their home states and age. Fig. 6.3 shows a good distribution as far as home states were concerned with fair representation from all the states in Malaysia except Perlis. Since it is the smallest and the northernmost state in Malaysia, it is highly likely that very few candidates from this state signed up for the distance learning programme in UKM. As for age group, most of the on-campus learners were 23 years and below, whereas most distance learners were in the 24-30 and 31-40 age



groups. Thus, it can be deduced that most distance learners are adult learners with working experience, whereas most on-campus learners are recent school-leavers.

### 6.2.4 Research procedures

The USLPCQs were distributed towards the end of the second semester. Since the distance learners did not have to attend any more tutorials by then, it was not possible to distribute the questionnaires in class. Two alternate methods of distribution were used. For the students taking their examination in the main campus, the questionnaires were distributed to them at the end of their English Proficiency Final Examination. A box was left outside the examination hall throughout the examination period and the students were instructed to put their questionnaires in the box or post them to me (if they were not able to complete them during the examination period). For students taking the examinations in centres in other parts of Malaysia, the questionnaires were given to selected invigilators assigned to the various centres. Since these centres were small, the invigilators were able to collect the questionnaires personally from the students on the second last day of the examination period. Students who failed to return the questionnaires were told to bring them on the following day or to post them to me. This method proved to be more effective as more than 60% of the questionnaires were collected from these centres. As for the on-campus students, the questionnaires were given to their English Proficiency instructors three weeks before the end of the semester, and the instructors were asked to collect them from the students the following week.

Altogether 1000 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the distance learners and 500 copies to the on-campus learners. The reason why I distributed such a large number of questionnaires to the distance learners was because I had no way of ensuring that they would return the questionnaires. In the case of the on-campus learners, I was quite confident I would get a high percentage of

returns since the questionnaires were distributed and collected by their class instructors who were my colleagues. The procedures adopted proved effective; 750 questionnaires were returned, 378 questionnaires (about 36%) from the distance learners and 356 questionnaires (about 76%) from the on-campus learners.

On checking through the questionnaires, it was discovered that the "How do you learn English?" section of 16 questionnaires were incomplete, and these were discarded. The remaining 734 questionnaires, which included those with missing components (i.e., missing information on year/proficiency level/discipline), were retained. See Fig.6.4 for a breakdown of the number of respondents in the various categories.



Mode	Year	Proficiency level	Discipline				Total
			SocSc	ApplSc	BusAdm	Missing	
Distance Learners	1	Lo	1	2	14	0	17
		Av	2	1	8	0	11
		Hi	3		3	1	7
		Missing	4	3	2	0	9
		Total	10	6	27	1	44
	2	Lo	93	20	46	1	160
		Av	30	17	31	0	78
		Hi	13	7	13	0	33
		Missing	11	11	12	1	35
		Total	147	55	102	2	306
	Missing	Lo	0	1	1	1	3
		Missing	0	1	1	4	6
		Total	0	2	2	5	9
On-campus Learners	1	Lo	31	43	46	0	120
		Av	23	61	49	1	134
		Hi	20	36	60	0	116
		Missing	0	4	3	1	8
		Total	74	144	158	2	378
Grand Total							734

Fig. 6.4 Breakdown of the number of respondents in the various categories

Fig. 6.4 shows approximately equal number of on-campus learners from the three proficiency levels. It also reveals that there were considerable fewer students from the Social Sciences compared to the other two disciplines. The distribution among the distance learners was even more uneven. There were considerably more respondents from the low proficiency level. In addition, there were considerably fewer respondents from the Applied Sciences compared to the other disciplines. This uneven distribution was due to two main factors. In the case of the distance learners, it was not possible to control the types of questionnaires that would be returned, although a selection procedure was used in the distribution of questionnaires. In the case of the on-campus learners, there were more students from certain proficiency levels and disciplines than others.

Item analysis, comparison of mean scores of scales/subscales, factor analysis and estimates of reliability (internal consistency and stability) were completed using SPSS (Version 9) statistical package. The 'factor analysis' procedure was adopted from Willing's study (1988) (see section 5.3.3) and the same hypothesis was used.

## 6.3 Analysis of Results

### 6.3.1 Item Analysis

An item analysis was carried out on the sample population. Its intention was to identify some general trends to enable a better understanding of how learners from different modes, different proficiency levels and different disciplines respond to each item individually. It has to be clarified here that the intention of this analysis was not to attribute a preference for a particular learning modality (proposed in a single question) as constituting in itself a learning style, as that would be over-presumptuous (Willing, 1988:152).



### 6.3.1.1 Presentation of results

A graphical comparison of the mean scores of the distance learners and the on-campus learners of different proficiency levels and disciplines was undertaken. This comparison revealed that the learning preferences of all the learners followed a somewhat similar pattern despite differences in modes, proficiency levels and disciplines (as indicated in Fig. 6.5).

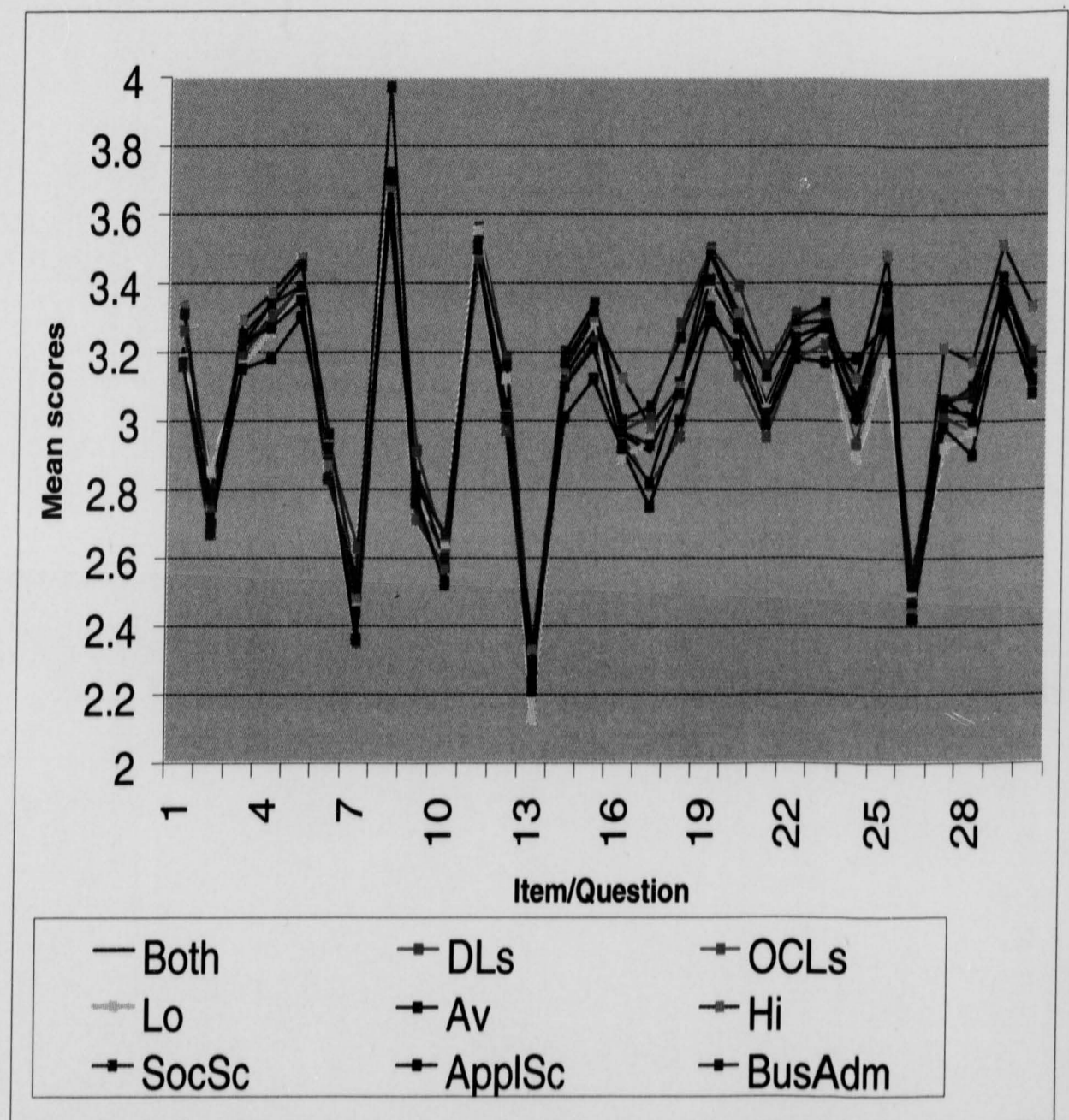


Fig. 6.5 A comparison of the mean scores of different types of learners

This similarity means that a ranking of items will show the general preferences of all students, notwithstanding modes, proficiency levels and disciplines (see Fig. 6.6 for a ranking of general preferences according to mean scores in descending order).

Item	N	SD	Mean
8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.	749	0.54	3.69
11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes	750	0.57	3.51
19. I like to learn many new words.	743	0.59	3.41
29. I like to learn English by watching and listening to people whose English is good.	750	0.67	3.39
5. In English class, I like to learn by viewing pictures, films and video.	748	0.67	3.39
25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.	744	0.69	3.30
4. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in conversations and discussions.	749	0.68	3.30
23. I like to learn English words by participating in related activities.	743	0.70	3.27
15. I like to learn English in a small group.	745	0.71	3.26
20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation of English words.	740	0.67	3.26
22. I like to learn English words by hearing them.	744	0.66	3.24
1. In English class, I like to learn by reading.	749	0.64	3.22
3. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in activities.	749	0.71	3.21
30. I like to learn English by using it in my daily life.	746	0.72	3.15
14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.	744	0.67	3.14
18. I like to study grammar.	744	0.75	3.12
12. I like the teacher to let me find my own mistakes.	742	0.73	3.08
21. I like to learn English words by seeing them.	746	0.76	3.05
27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.	749	0.73	3.04
28. I like to learn English by talking to friends.	745	0.72	3.03
24. At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers, etc.	745	0.79	3.00
16. I like to learn English with the whole class.	742	0.77	2.96
17. I like to go out with the class and practise speaking in English.	740	0.78	2.92
6. In English class, I like to learn by taking down notes.	750	0.74	2.91
9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.	750	0.71	2.82
2. In English class, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.	747	0.77	2.76
10. I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interest.	750	0.76	2.60
26. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.	748	0.83	2.50
7. In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures.	749	0.87	2.50
13. I like to study English on my own.	745	0.80	2.26

N = Number of students who responded to that item.

SD = Standard Deviation

Fig. 6.6 Ranking of general preferences according to mean scores (in descending order).



From the ranked chart it is possible to make the following general observations regarding preferences of the learners:

- The range of their preferences fell mainly between the mean scores of 2.5 to 3.5.
- The item that had the highest mean scores was **item 8**, which was "I like the teacher to explain everything to us". This was followed by:

Item 11, "I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes".

Item 19, "I like to learn many new words".

Item 29, "I like to learn English by watching and listening to people whose English is good".

Item 5, "In English class, I like to learn by viewing pictures, films and video".

- The item that had the lowest mean score was **item 13**, which was "I like to study English on my own". This was followed by :

Item 7, "In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures".

Item 26, "At home, I like to learn by studying English books".

Item 10, "I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interests"

Item 2, " In English class, I like to learn by listening to cassettes".

### 6.3.1.2 Discussion of results

The small difference in range and the lack of strong dislikes or strong preferences can be interpreted in many ways. One highly possible explanation is that students were reluctant to express strong dislikes or strong preferences due to cultural influences. The results also suggested that the learners were generally teacher-centred, preferring to learn in the classroom under the attention of their teachers than to learn on their own. They did not like 'pure' aural activities and instead preferred viewing pictures, films, and videos. They also displayed a

preference towards learning new words, and learning and listening to people good in English. To what extent these views are true will be revealed by more in depth analysis undertaken later in the chapter.

An unexpected result was their lack of preference for item 10. I would expect the learners to like to be given an opportunity to speak about their interests, but it seemed this was not so. This could possibly be due to a lack of confidence to speak in English in front of the class and the fear of 'losing face'.

The results further suggested that the distance learners were not very different from the on-campus learners. Learners in general seemed not to display higher preferences for autonomous and more individualistic styles of learning. The Higher Proficiency learners also did not seem to be more independent, and disciplines seemed not to have any effects on preferences either. Since the information from the ranking displayed almost similar patterns, there was a need for a more sophisticated tool to identify the differences. Factor analysis, along the same line as Willing's (1988) study seemed to be the most appropriate tool to use. This will be discussed in the next section.

### 6.3.2 Factor analysis

Since the intended purpose of this study was illuminative and not predictive, exploratory factor analysis was used. Principal components factor analysis of the thirty items was carried out (with SPSS 9.0 programme) on the distance learners and the on-campus learners separately to enable a comparison of factors between the two modes of learners. The varimax ® (orthogonal) rotation and Kaiser normalisation (Nunnally, 1978; Kim and Mueller, 1978) procedure was used. It yielded a nine-factor solution which accounted for 62.85% of the variance in the distance learners and 58.69% of the variance in the on-campus learners. However, I was not able to find any coherent pattern through analysis of the items in the nine factors of both the distance learners and the on-campus learners.



The Scree Test (proposed by Cattell, 1966) suggested the possibility of ignoring the five lower factors as they appeared to be levelling off with the lower components. In view of that, I decided to limit the factors to four (like Willing) and performed principal components factor analysis again. This time I obtained a four-factor solution with an explained variance of 42.84% for the distance learners and 39.25 % for the on-campus learners. The above procedures were repeated with the oblimin (oblique) rotation with Kaiser normalisation. Very similar results were obtained. In view of that I decided to use only the results obtained from the varimax ® rotation. To decrease cross-loadings and to increase efficiency from these results, all items that loaded below 0.3 were deleted. In cases where there were cross-loadings of items between factors, the lower loadings were automatically deleted. Finally, any loading of below 0.4 was deleted. (see Fig.6.7 and Fig. 6.8 for a diagrammatic representations of the selection processes for the distance learners and the on-campus learners).

	Factors				Decisions
Item	1	2	3	4	
1			0.51		
2				0.51	
3		0.65			
4		0.69			
5				0.66	
6			0.70		
7			0.69		
8		0.40			
9		0.38	0.33	-0.35	Items deleted – loadings too low and too close
10		0.51			
11		0.49			
12					
13		-0.40	0.48		Negative loading indicates dislike for item.
14		0.55			
15		0.68			
16		0.38	0.34		Items deleted – loadings too low and too close
17	0.52	0.43			Lower loading deleted
18	0.46				
19	0.64				
20	0.62				
21	0.38			0.56	Lower loading deleted
22				0.43	
23	0.40	0.54			Lower loading deleted
24	0.70		0.30		Lower loading deleted
25	0.59				
26				0.48	
27	0.65		0.41		Lower loading deleted
28	0.61	0.42			Lower loading deleted
29	0.34	0.34			Item deleted – loadings too low and too close
30	0.64	0.33			Lower loading deleted

Fig. 6.7 A diagrammatic representation of the selection process for the distance learners



	Factors				Decision
Item	1	2	3	4	
1				0.43	
2			0.58		
3		0.68			
4	0.52	0.49			Item deleted. Loadings too close.
5			0.46		
6				0.66	
7				0.47	
8				0.61	
9				0.52	
10	0.34	0.36			Item deleted. Loadings too close and too low.
11				0.52	
12					
13		-0.59			High negative loading –indicates strong dislike for item.
14	0.60				
15		0.60			
16		0.40			
17	0.68				
18	0.42			0.30	Lower loading deleted
19	0.50				
20	0.44				
21			0.55		
22			0.56		
23		0.62			
24	0.42				
25			0.57		
26			0.69		
27	0.34	-0.30	0.40		Item deleted—loadings too low and too close
28	0.74				
29	0.35				Item deleted – loading too low
30	0.74				

Fig. 6.8 A diagrammatic representation of the selection process for the on-campus learners

The patterns that emerged were very interesting. Some were similar to that of Willing's and some were not. Fig. 6.9 and Fig.6.10 compare the factors of the distance learners and the on-campus learners.

Items/Questions	Factor I		Factor II	
	Distance learners	On-campus learners	Distance learners	On-campus learners
<b>Percentage of variance accounted for by this factor</b>	15.10%	12.83%	13.23%	9.22%
14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.		0.60		
17. I like to go out with the class and practise speaking in English.	0.52	0.68		
18. I like to study grammar.	0.46	0.42		
19. I like to learn many new words.	0.64	0.50		
20. I like to practice the sounds and pronunciation of English words.	0.62	0.44		
24. At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers, etc.	0.70	0.42		
25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.	0.59			
27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.	0.59			
28. I like to learn English by talking to friends.	0.61	0.74		
30. I like to learn English by using it in my daily life.	0.64	0.74		
3. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in activities.			0.65	0.68
4. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in conversations and discussions.			0.69	
8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.			0.40	
10. I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interest.			0.51	
11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistake.			0.49	
13. I like to study English on my own			-0.40	-0.59
14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs			0.55	
15. I like to learn English in a small group.			0.68	0.60
16. I like to learn English with the whole class.				0.40
23. I like to learn English by participating in related activities.			0.54	0.62

Fig. 6.9 A comparison of Factor I and Factor II of the distance learners and the on-campus learners



Items/Questions	Factor III of the distance learners	Factor IV of the on- campus learners	Factor IV of the distance learners	Factor III of the on- campus learners
<b>Percentage of variance accounted for by this factor</b>	7.42	8.07%	7.10%	9.12%
1. In English class, I like to learn by reading.	0.51	0.43		
6. In English class, I like to learn by taking down notes.	0.70	0.66		
7. In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures.	0.69	0.47		
8. I like the teacher to explain everything.		0.61		
9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.		0.52		
11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.		0.52		
13. I like to study English on my own.	0.48			
2. In English class, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.			0.51	0.58
5. In English class, I like to learn by viewing pictures, films and videos.			0.66	0.46
21. I like to learn words by seeing them.			0.56	0.55
22. I like to learn English words by hearing them.			0.43	0.57
25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.				0.57
26. At home, I like to learn by listening to cassettes			0.48	0.69

Fig. 6.10 A comparison of Factor III and Factor IV of the distance learners and the on-campus learners

Willing's in his study was able to identify two 'pure' groups i.e., field dependent in the classic sense, which he called 'concrete learners', and field independent in the classic sense, which he called 'analytical learners'. In this study there appeared to be no 'pure' groups. However, I was able to identify two common factors between the distance learners and the on-campus learners. Factor I of the distance learners was found to be similar to Factor I of the on-campus learners, and Factor IV of the distance learners was found to be similar to Factor III of the on-campus learners. To standardise the items in these common factors, items that were not common to both groups of learners were eliminated. Thus, items 25 and 27 were eliminated from Factor I of the distance learners, and item 14 from Factor I of the on-campus learners. Similarly, item 25 was eliminated from Factor III of the on-campus learners.

A comparison of the factors of the distance learners and the on-campus learners with those of Willing's was then undertaken and the following learning styles were identified from this study:

### **The distance learners**

- Factor I --- 'Analytical-communicative learning style' (Common Factor I)
- Factor II --- 'Communicative-authority-oriented learning style'
- Factor III --- 'Pseudo-authority-oriented learning style'
- Factor IV --- 'Pseudo-concrete learning style' (Common Factor II)

### **The on-campus learners**

- Factor I --- 'Analytical-communicative learning style' (Common Factor I)
- Factor II --- 'Communicative learning style'
- Factor III --- 'Pseudo-concrete learning style' (Common Factor II)
- Factor IV --- 'Authority-oriented learning style'

### **6.3.2.1 Reliability**

Before proceeding any further it is important to check the internal consistency of the items in each factor. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient was used for this purpose. For the distance learners, Factor I had a standardised  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.82, Factor II, 0.76, Factor III, 0.56, Factor IV, 0.66. As for the on-campus learners, Factor I had a standardised  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.77, Factor II, 0.67, Factor III, 0.62, Factor IV, 0.60. Although the internal consistency of five factors were below 0.7 (the normally accepted required level), they were all above 0.55 which can be considered 'reliable' since this is an exploratory study and some of these factors have only four variables. Having confirmed that the classification of factors was reliable, it is now time to describe the factors in greater detail. This will be undertaken in the next section.



### 6.3.2.2 Description of the factors

The discovery of factors which represent certain learning orientations or syndromes or styles which resemble the field independence/field dependence construct confirms Willing's hypothesis. However, as pointed out earlier the patterns in these factors differ from that of Willing in many aspects. In this section, I will first describe the two common factors. Common Factor I is a more important factor as it accounted for a high proportion of the variance. It possesses characteristics of Willing's 'analytical/FI learning style' i.e., (1) interest in studying grammar structures, (2) interest in learning the rules of the language which includes learning meanings of new words and sounds, and pronunciation of words and (3) desire to learn the language alone at home, through reading newspapers. However, Common factor I differs from Willing's and Kolb's analytical learning style in that characteristics of 'communicative'/FD learning style are also present i.e., (1) interest in going out and practise speaking English (2) interest in talking to friends in English and (3) interest in using English in their daily life. Thus, I think it is appropriate to describe learners displaying pattern of common Factor I as **'analytical-communicative learners'** (with active FI/FD tendency)

Willing (1988) described his 'communicative learners' as "people who in fact have a field independent tendency, but who indicate a desire for a communicative and social learning approach, probably in part because they feel that this would be most useful for their needs in relation to language learning" (p.159). He viewed them as such because he felt that 'there can be a certain self-directedness involved in deliberately using interactions for learning purposes' (Willing, 1988: 159). Personally, I feel it is more appropriate to use his description for my 'analytical-communicative learners' because his 'communicative learners' do not display clear FI tendency. Thus, in my opinion, the 'analytical-communicative learners' are actually FI learners, but are indicating a desire to communicate socially in English as they know that they cannot learn a language without actively interacting in it. In my opinion, 'analytical-communicative learners' have the potential to be successful in learning a language at a distance since they have

the advantage of being able to learn well independently. They will enjoy the freedom of planning their own schedule, working at their own pace and learning in self-access centres. To make up for lack of classroom interaction they will make use of opportunities in their daily life to communicate in English.

As for common Factor II, it possesses characteristics of Willing's 'concrete learning style', i.e., (1) preferring very direct means of taking in and processing information, such as, listening to spoken English through cassettes in and out of class and (2) viewing pictures, films and videos. However, the similarities end there. Willing 'concrete learning style' includes spontaneous, unpremeditated, people-oriented characteristics, such as interest in learning through games, excursions, or close interactions, and not in terms of organised pointed class 'conversation'. These 'classic' FD characteristic are not evident in common Factor II. Instead common Factor II possesses FI characteristics i.e., preferences towards learning English words by seeing them and hearing them. Thus, it is obvious that common Factor II is different from Willing's 'concrete learning style' although it manifests some similar basic characteristics. Thus, I believe it is appropriate to call learners preferring this pattern of behaviour '**pseudo-concrete learners**' (with passive FI/FD tendency). In my opinion, distance learners preferring this pattern of behaviour are at an advantage learning at a distance since they enjoy visual and auditory activities which are significant components of the distance learning mode. But, they may have problem with the oral aspect of language learning.

Having discussed the common Factors, I will now discuss Factor II of the distance learners and the on-campus learners together, then Factor III of the distance learners and Factor IV of on-campus learners together. Factor II of the distance learners display characteristics of Willing's 'communicative learning style'. These students enjoy learning through activities, conversations, discussions, pair work and group work. In addition, it also possesses characteristics of Willing's 'authority-oriented learning style'. The students like teachers to explain everything, ask them to talk about their interest and tell them



their mistakes. However, this factor does not possess the structural characteristics of Willing's 'authority-oriented learning style' i.e., (1) interest in learning by reading, (2) interest in studying grammar, and (3) interest in learning English words by seeing them. Thus, learners inclined to this factor can be described as **'communicative-authority-oriented learners'** (with passive/active FD tendency).

In my opinion, 'communicative-authority-oriented distance learners' will have most difficulty in coping with studying English at a distance. Their desire for classroom interactions and teachers' attention suggest that they will be quite lost and insecure learning on their own. Unless they are able to adjust to the situation, they will most probably not be able to perform well in their attempt to learn a language through this mode.

Factor II of the on-campus learners displays characteristics of the 'communicative' component of Factor II of the distance learners without the 'authority-oriented' component. Learners manifesting this pattern are similar to Willing's 'communicative learners' in certain ways. However, they do not display any FI tendency. I think it is still appropriate to call them as **'communicative learners'** (with active FD tendency). In my opinion, these learners will enjoy learning English through classroom interactions.

Factor III of the distance learners displays structural characteristics that are similar to Willing's 'authority-oriented learning style' i.e., preferring to learn (1) by reading, (2) by taking down notes and (3) by listening to lectures. However, it does not display characteristics that indicate a need for teacher's direction. Instead, the factor has an item that indicates a desire to study English alone. I think it is suitable to designate learners belonging to this group as **'pseudo-authority-oriented learners'** (with passive FI/FD tendency) to differentiate them from Factor IV of the on-campus learners, who are real **'authority-oriented learners'** (with passive FI/FD tendency) and who have characteristics similar to Willing's 'authority-oriented learners'.

In my opinion, 'pseudo-authority-oriented distance learners' will be able to handle the reading and written component of language learning quite effectively but will have difficulty with the spoken component of language learning, as they do not express any desire to communicate in the language. 'Authority-oriented on-campus learners' will not face many problems considering they have regular contact with their language teachers, which they desire.

The characteristics of the various learning style groups are given in Fig. 6.11. The groups will be compared in the order they are described in the next section. The similarities and differences between each pair of groups are indicated in the figure. Fig. 6.12 gives a graphic representation of my two dimensional framework of learning style that positions the six learner types within the FI-FD/active-passive dimensions. As pointed out in the previous chapter, these sketches do not represent 'real people' in the sense that most learners do not fall neatly into a specific quadrant instead they manifest a continuum of FI-FD/active-passive characteristics (Skehan, 1998: 249). However, they do manifest certain groups of characteristics more than others (as shown by Willing in his study and in this study as well), thus it is reasonable to describe learners as belonging to a particular category.



Characteristics of learning style groups:		Similarities and Differences between groups (if any)
of the distance learners	of the on-campus learners	
<b>(I) 'analytical-communicative learners'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— I like to study grammar.</li> <li>— I like to learn many new words.</li> <li>— I like to practice the sounds and pronunciation of English words.</li> <li>— At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers, etc.</li> <li>— I like to go out with the class and practise speaking in English.</li> <li>— I like to learn English by talking to friends.</li> <li>— I like to learn English by using it in my daily life.</li> </ul>	<b>(I) 'analytical-communicative learners'</b> <p>Same as the distance learners</p>	Both groups are analytical in nature. They desire outside classroom interaction to improve their ability to communicate in English.
<b>(II) 'communicative-authority-oriented learners'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by taking part in activities.</li> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by taking part in conversations and discussions.</li> <li>— I don't like to study English on my own</li> <li>— I like to learn English by talking in pairs</li> <li>— I like to learn English in a small group.</li> <li>— I like to learn English by participating in related activities.</li> <li>— I like the teacher to explain everything to us.</li> <li>— I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interest.</li> <li>— I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.</li> </ul>	<b>(II) 'communicative learners'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by taking part in activities.</li> <li>— I don't like to study English on my own.</li> <li>— I like to learn English in a small group.</li> <li>— I like to learn English with the whole class.</li> <li>— I like to learn English by participating in related activities.</li> </ul>	Both groups desire classroom interactions. However, the distance learners desire teachers' directions and guidance whereas the on-campus learners do not.

<p><b>(III) 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by reading.</li> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by taking down notes.</li> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures.</li> <li>— I like to study English on my own.</li> </ul>	<p><b>(IV) 'authority-oriented learners'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by reading.</li> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by taking down notes.</li> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures.</li> <li>— I like the teacher to explain everything.</li> <li>— I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.</li> <li>— I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.</li> </ul>	<p>Both groups like to learn passively in a classroom environment.</p> <p>The on-campus learners like teachers' guidance and directions whereas the distance learners like to learn on their own.</p>
<p><b>(IV) 'pseudo-concrete learners'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.</li> <li>— In English class, I like to learn by viewing pictures, films and videos.</li> <li>— I like to learn words by seeing them.</li> <li>— I like to learn English words by hearing them.</li> <li>— At home, I like to learn by listening to cassettes</li> </ul>	<p><b>(III) 'pseudo-concrete learners'</b></p> <p>Same as the distance learners</p>	<p>Both groups like audio-visual learning.</p>

Fig. 6.11 Characteristics of the various learning style groups



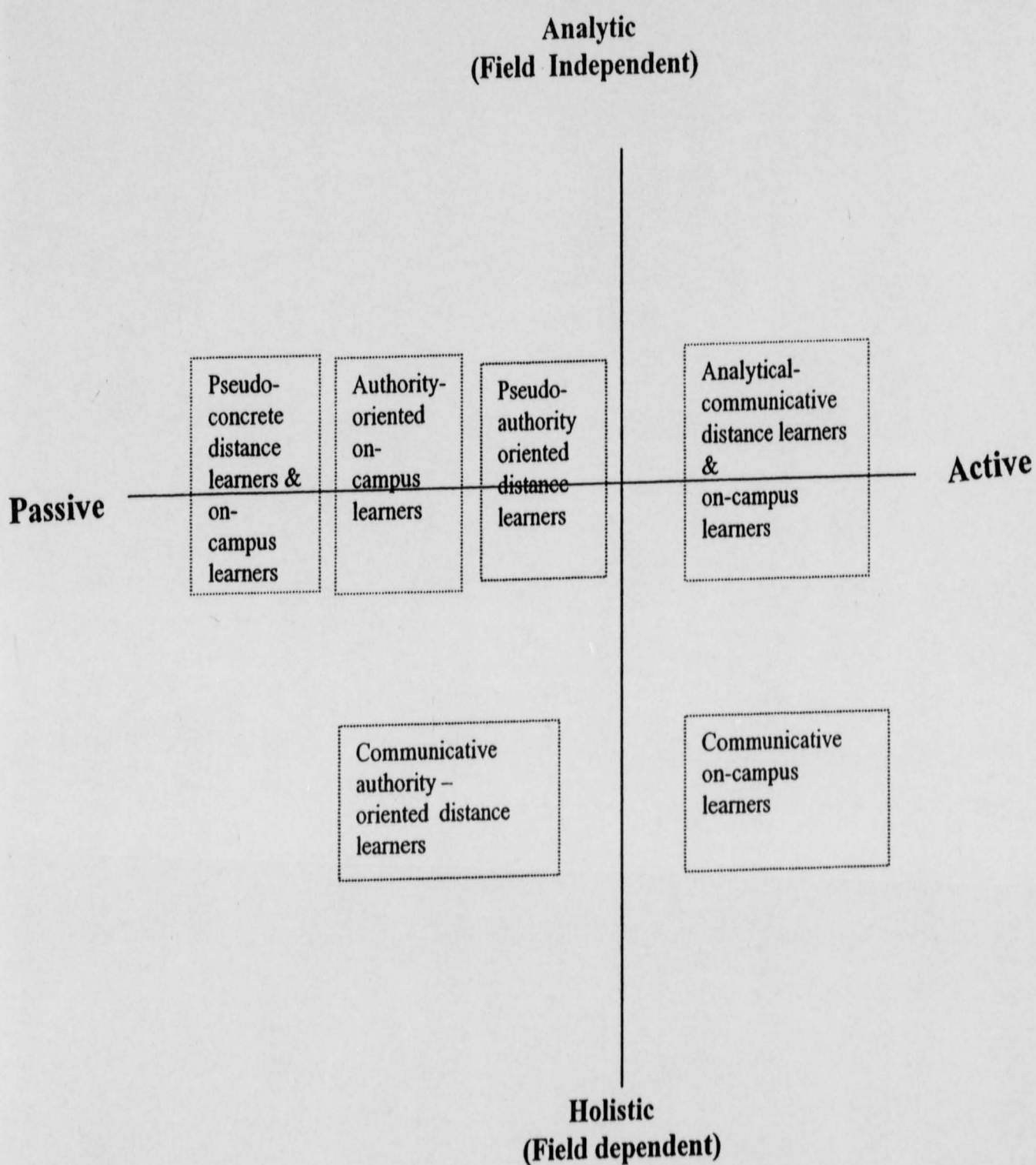


Fig. 6.12 My two dimensional framework of learner style

### 6.3.2.3 Scoring

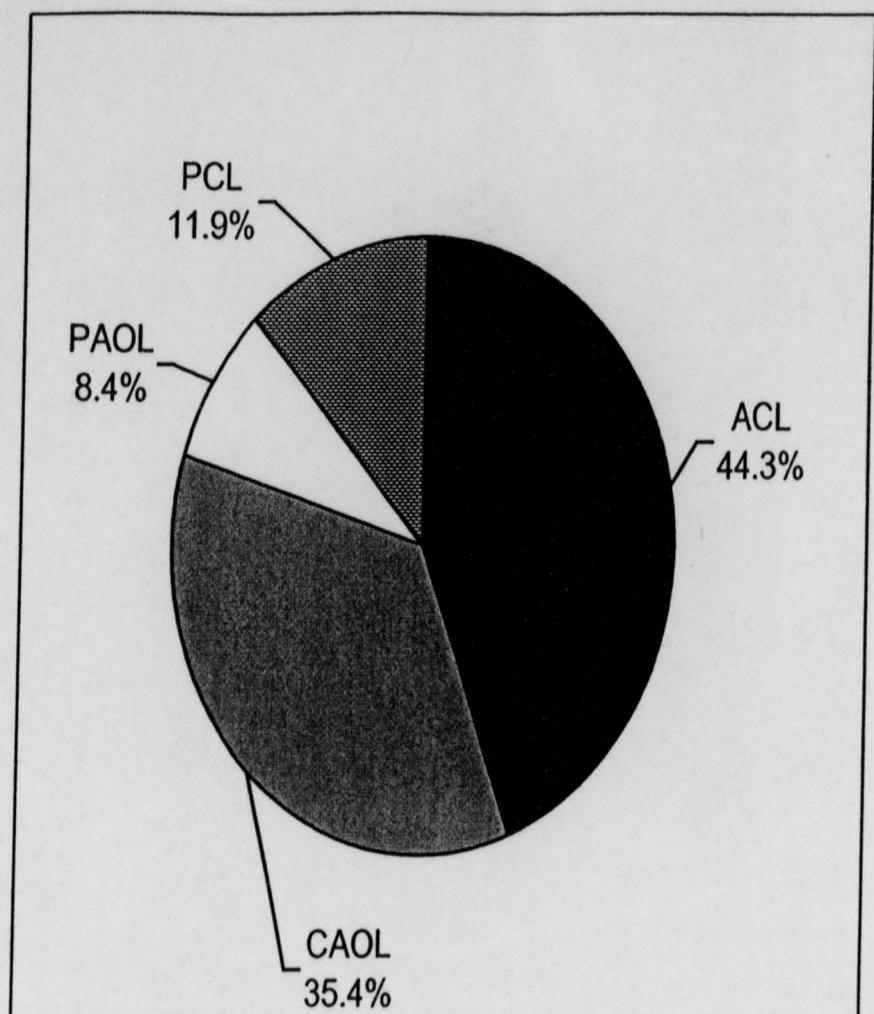
Having identified the six types of learning style groups, it is now essential to describe the procedures used to identify 'the predominant style of each subject'. The method used is based on that of Willing (1988). The mean score of each subject's responses to the items listed under each factor was calculated. However, responses to item 13 were not included in Factor II of the distance learners and the on-campus learners as it loaded negatively. The factor that yielded the highest mean score was then considered to be 'the predominant style for that person'. The person was then placed in the type of learning style group which was defined by that set of questions. The characteristics of the members of each 'group' were then studied statistically. The influences of the differences in modes, proficiency levels and disciplines on the characteristics of the members of each 'learning style group' were also studied statistically. Admittedly, to equate the highest mean score with the use of the term 'learning style group' may appear presumptuous, but in view of the fact that Willing used this approach in his study, and that my intention is to compare my findings with that of Willing, I think it is appropriate to use the same terminology.

### 6.3.2.4 Presentation of results

#### *Relationship between modes and learning style groups*

Fig. 6.13 and Fig. 6.14 present a breakdown of the distance learners and the on-campus learners respectively into learning style groups. Fig 6.15 presents a comparison of the learning style groups of the distance learners and the on-campus learners.



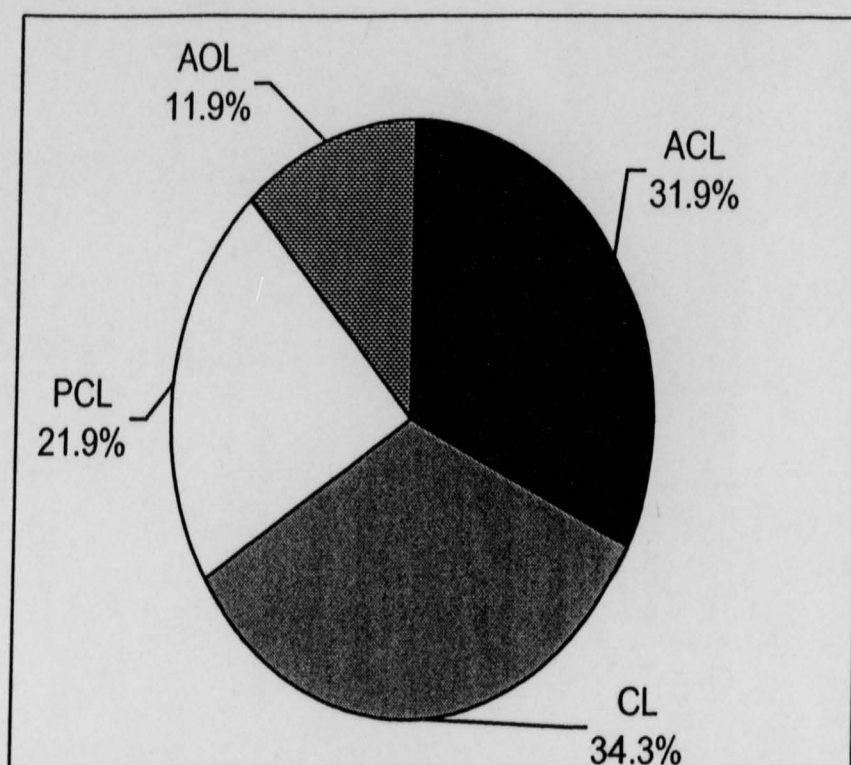


ACL = Analytical communicative learners  
CAOL = Communicative-authority-oriented learners  
PAOL = Pseudo-authority-oriented learners  
PCL = Pseudo-concrete learners

---

Fig. 6.13 Breakdown of the distance learners into learning style groups

Fig. 6.13 indicates that the percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' was the highest, constituting 44.3% of the distance learners. This was followed by 'communicative-authority-oriented learners', constituting 35.4% of the distance learners. The findings suggested that they were the dominant learning style groups. The other two groups were less significant as each group accounted for less than 10% of the distance learners.



ACL = Analytical communicative learners

CL = Communicative learners

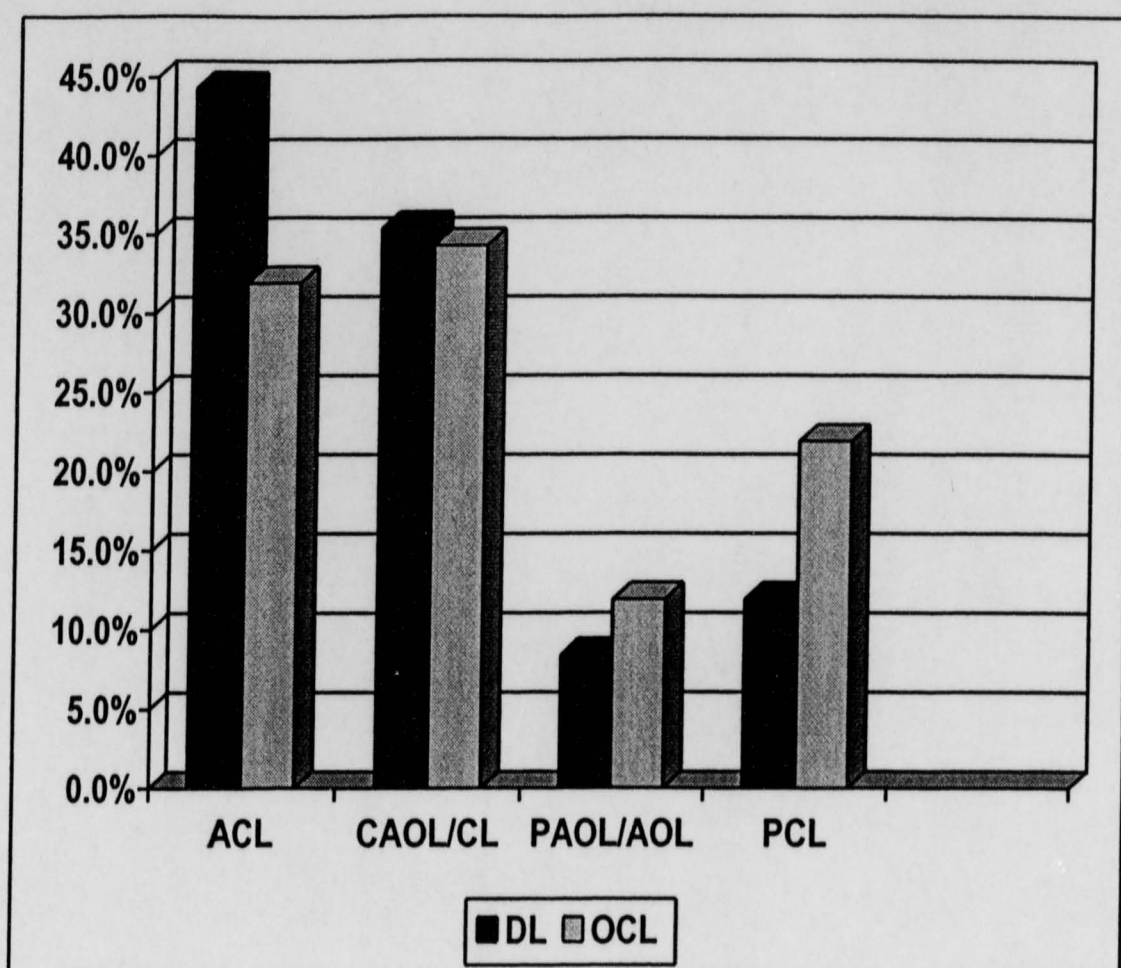
PCL = Pseudo-concrete learners

PCL = Authority-oriented learners

Fig. 6.14 Breakdown of the on-campus learners into learning style groups

Fig.6.14 indicates that the percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' and 'communicative learners' was about the same, each constituting around 30% of the on-campus learners. These were the dominant learning style groups. 'Pseudo-concrete learners' was the next group, accounting for 21.9% of the on-campus learners. Authority-oriented learners was the least significant group, accounting for only 11.9% of the on-campus learners.





ACL = 'analytical-communicative learners'

CCL = 'classroom-centred learners'

AVL = 'audio-visual learners'

Fig. 6.15 Comparison of common learning style groups between the distance learners and the on-campus learners

Fig. 6.15 reveals that there was a higher percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' in the distance learners than in the on-campus learners. However, the percentage of 'communicative-authority-oriented' distance learners was approximately the same as the percentage of 'communicative' on-campus learners. The percentage of 'pseudo-authority-oriented' distance learners was also almost the same as that of 'authority-oriented' on-campus learners whereas the percentage of 'pseudo-concrete learners' was much higher in the on-campus learners than in the distance learners.

## Discussion of results

The findings revealed that more than 40% of the distance learners were 'analytical-communicative learners' making this the most dominant learning style among the distance learners. In addition to that, they further revealed that the percentage of analytical-communicative learners was much higher in the distance learners than in the on-campus learners. These findings clearly suggested that, on the whole, the distance learners were more oriented to learning English independently than the on-campus learners. At the same time, they were more able to utilise opportunities in their daily life to interact in English.

However, the finding that over 35% of the distance learners were 'communicative-authority-oriented learners' is a disturbing feature. Learners belonging to this category are classroom-centred, dependent on classroom interaction and teachers' directions. It can be predicted that these distance learners will find it difficult to learn a language without classroom support. The findings further revealed that there were about the same percentages of 'communicative-authority-oriented' distance learners and 'communicative' on-campus learners. The common characteristic between these two learning styles is a desire for classroom interaction. In the case of the on-campus learners, this is not a problem as they have plenty of opportunities to interact in class but, in the case of the distance learners, this is a feature that is definitely lacking. The issue of how to help these distance learners to learn English effectively without classroom interaction has to be given serious consideration.

The findings further revealed that the percentage of 'pseudo-concrete learners' was less in the distance learners than in the on-campus learners. Learners with this learning style are not keen to communicate and interact in English. Instead, they prefer to learn English through audio-visual means. In my opinion, the biggest problem these learners face will be how to communicate/interact effectively in English. This problem will be particularly acute in the case of the distance learners who are studying on their own without guidance and support of



their language teachers. Thus, it is fortunate that there was only a small percentage of them among the distance learners.

The percentages of 'pseudo-authority-oriented distance learners' and 'authority-oriented on-campus learners' were very low. Besides, the difference in percentages between them was not pronounced. In my opinion, 'pseudo-authority-oriented' distance learners will be able to handle the listening, reading and writing components of learning English but will have difficulty learning how to speak English. The same applies to 'authority-oriented' on-campus learners. However, 'authority-oriented' on-campus learners have the advantage of being constantly exposed to classroom interaction. The fact that there were only small percentages of these two groups of learners suggested that they were not significant learning styles.

What we can surmise from these findings is that there are differences between the ways that the distance learners and the on-campus learners approached the learning of English. On the whole, the distance learners seemed more oriented to learning English independently than the on-campus learners. It is possible that, since the distance learners are more mature learners, they are likely to be more independent learners. However, I believe the situation is more complex than that. I would like to propose the possibility of learners opting for learning styles that they believe are suitable for the mode they are studying in. As Witkin and Goodenough (1981) suggested, it is possible for some individuals to differ in their cognitive style flexibility. That is, some individuals are more fixed in their FI/FD orientation, while others are more mobile. The more mobile individuals are capable of showing characteristics of both cognitive styles, depending on the learning situation. Brown (1987) further suggested that the key to success in second language learning is mobility that allows learners to exercise "a sufficient degree of the appropriate style" (pp. 87-88) in a given context. Thus, it is possible for on-campus learners who are 'mobile' in their cognitive styles to shift their learning style from a more analytical (FI) to a more classroom-oriented (FD)

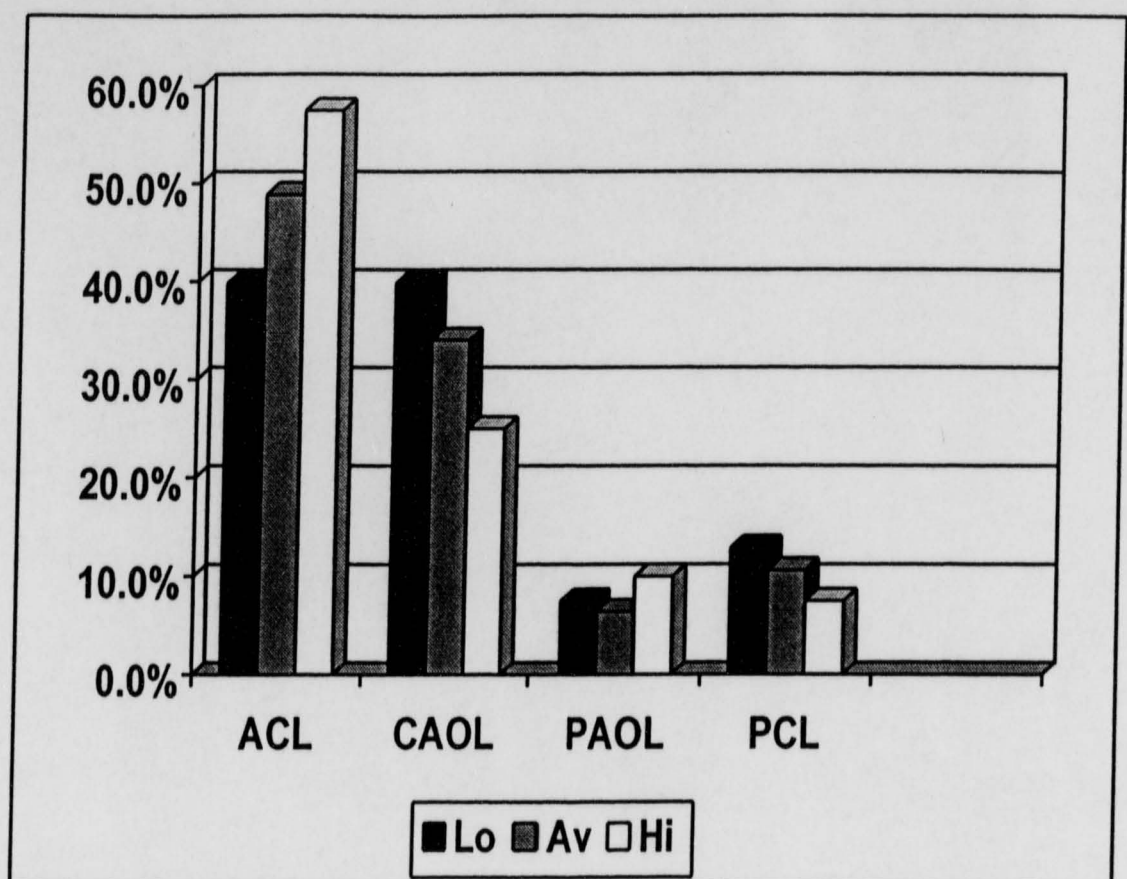
one to suit the mode they are studying in, and the reverse is also possible in the case of the distance learners.

The findings further revealed that there was still a large percentage of the distance learners who were very dependent on classroom interaction and teachers' directions and guidance. There was also a smaller and less significant group of distance learners who expressed no interest in classroom interaction, but preferred a more audio-visual learning style. These groups would most probably be less 'mobile' in their FI/FD orientation since they were unable to shift to a learning style that was more appropriate to the distance mode of learning.

### ***Relationship between proficiency levels and learning style groups***

Fig. 6.16 and Fig. 6.17 show a breakdown of the distance learners and the on-campus learners respectively into learning style groups according to proficiency levels. Fig. 6.18 shows a comparison of learning style groups of the distance learners and the on-campus learners across proficiency levels.

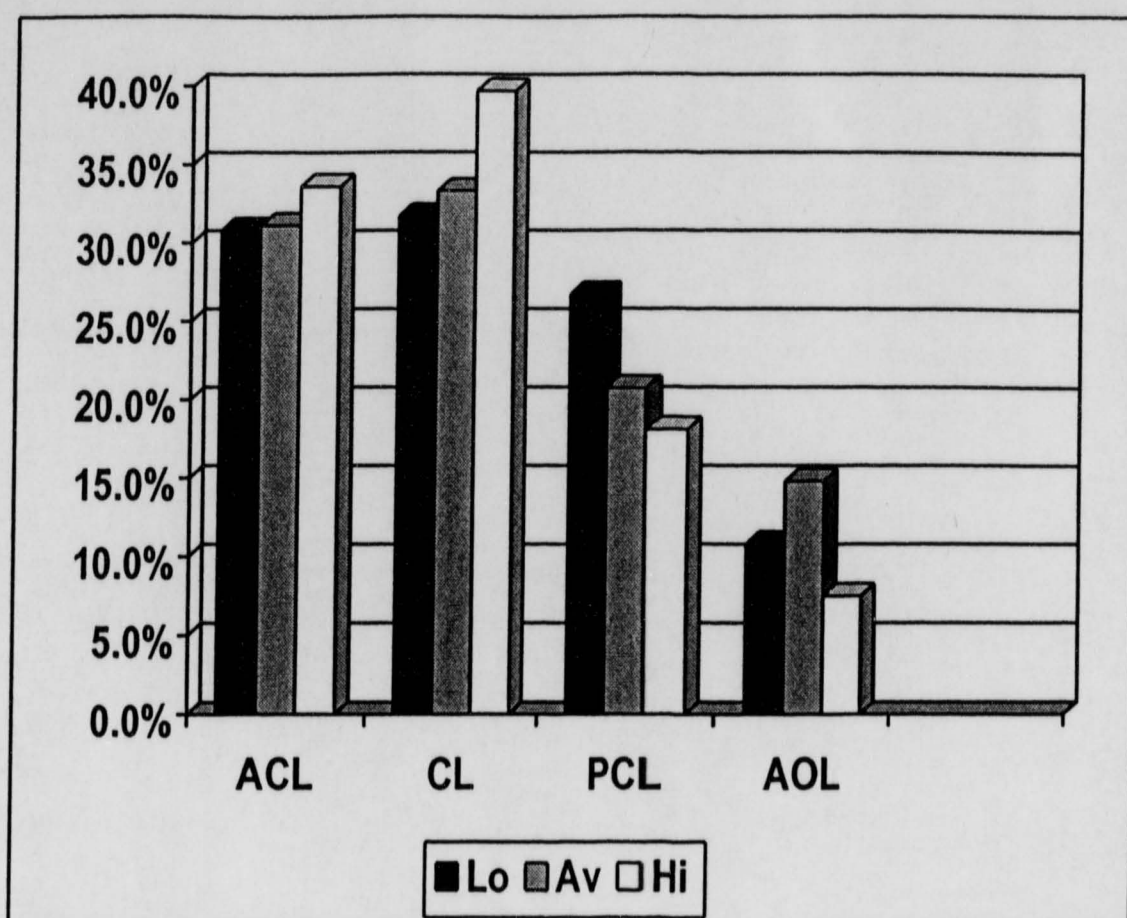




ACL = Analytical communicative learners  
 CAOL = Communicative-authority-oriented learners  
 PAOL = Pseudo-authority-oriented learners  
 PCL = Pseudo-concrete learners

Fig. 6.16 Comparison of learning style groups of the distance learners among proficiency levels

Fig. 6.16 reveals that the High Proficiency distance learners had the highest percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners', and the Low Proficiency distance learners had the lowest percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners'. The trend was reversed in the case of 'communicative-authority-oriented learners' with the Low Proficiency distance learners having the highest percentage and the High Proficiency distance learners having the highest percentage. The differences in percentages of 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners' and 'pseudo-concrete learners' among the three proficiency levels were not pronounced.



ACL = Analytical communicative learners

CL = Communicative learners

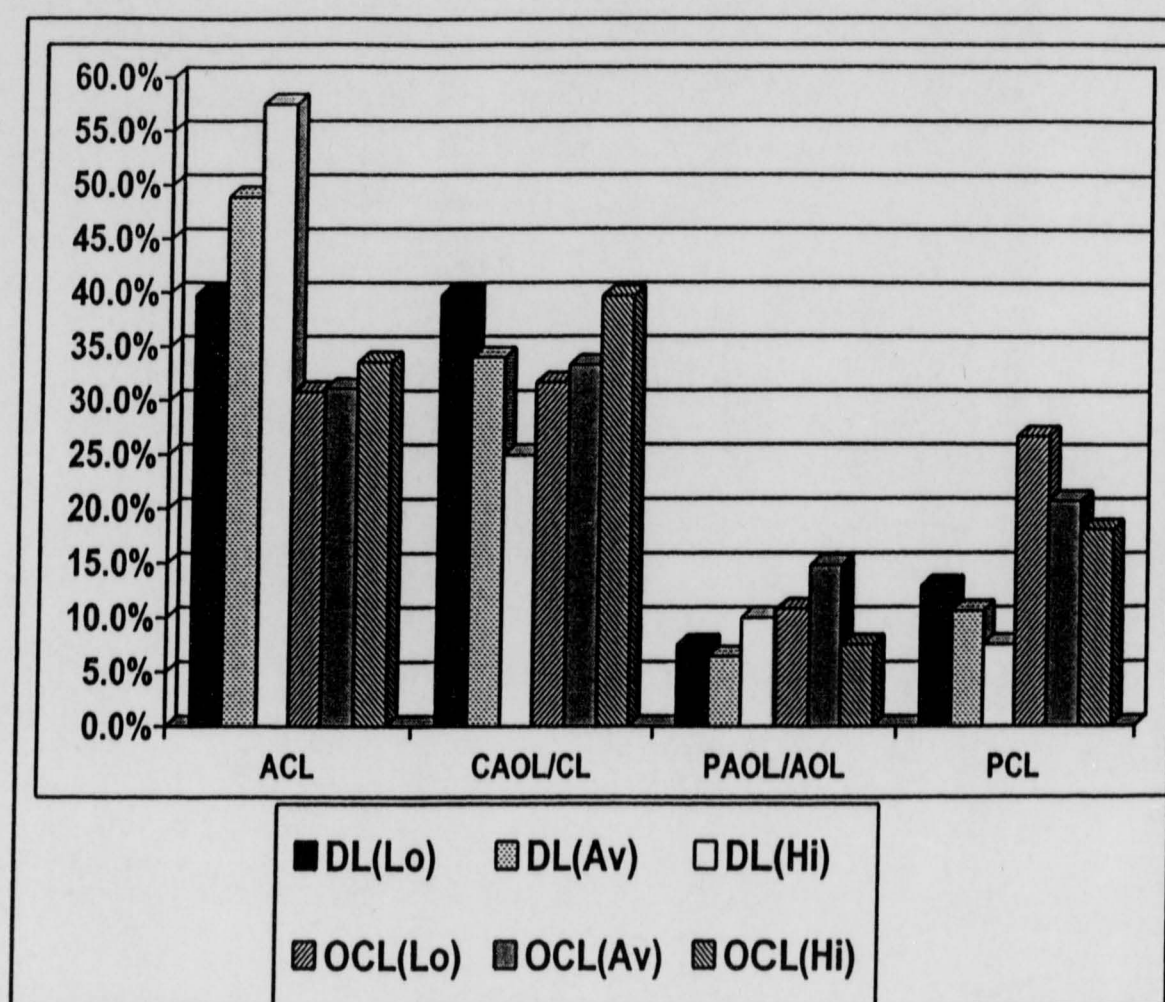
PCL = Pseudo-concrete learners

AOL = Authority-oriented learners

Fig. 6.17 Comparison of learning style groups of the on-campus learners among proficiency levels

Fig. 6.17 reveals that the differences in percentages of 'analytical-communicative learners' among the three proficiency levels were not pronounced. However, there was a higher percentage of 'communicative learners' among the High Proficiency learners compared to the other two proficiency levels. The reverse was true for 'pseudo-concrete learners', with the Low Proficiency having the highest percentage and the High Proficiency having the lowest. The Average Proficiency learners had the highest percentage of authority-oriented learners, followed by the Low Proficiency learners and the High Proficiency learners.





ACL = 'analytical-communicative learners'

CAOL = 'communicative-authority-oriented learners'

CL = 'communicative learners'

PAOL = 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners'

AOL = 'authority-oriented learners'

PCL = 'pseudo-concrete learners'

Fig. 6.18 Comparison of learning style groups of the distance learners and the on-campus learners among proficiency levels

Fig. 6.18 reveals that the percentages of 'analytical-communicative learners' among proficiency levels for the distance learners and the on-campus learners were very different. In the case of the distance learners, the percentage was the highest in the High Proficiency learners, and lowest in the Low Proficiency learners. In the on-campus learners, the percentages among proficiency levels were almost similar. The trend of 'communicative-authority-oriented' distance learners was also very different from that of 'communicative' on-campus learners. For the former, the percentages decreased with an increase in proficiency levels and the reverse was true in the latter. In the case of 'pseudo-concrete learners', the pattern in the distance learners was the same as in the on-

campus learners, with the Low Proficiency levels having the highest percentages and the High Proficiency levels having the lowest percentages. The differences, however, were not pronounced. The differences in percentages of 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners' and 'authority-oriented learners' were not pronounced, and hence would not be discussed.

## Discussion of results

The findings revealed that the High Proficiency distance learners had the highest percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners'. This suggested that the High Proficiency distance learners were the most oriented to learning English successfully at a distance. The reverse was true for the Low Proficiency distance learners. The findings further revealed that the Low Proficiency distance learners had the highest percentage of 'communicative-authority-oriented learners'. Learners belonging to this category are the most classroom-centred, in the sense they are more dependent on classroom interaction and teachers' directions and guidance. This finding reaffirmed the earlier claim that Low Proficiency distance learners were the least oriented to learning successfully at a distance. These findings strongly suggested the likelihood of a positive relationship between distance learners' proficiency levels in English and their abilities to learn English successfully.

The above patterns were not evident in the case of the on-campus learners. The percentages of 'analytical-communicative learners' among the three proficiency levels were very similar and the pattern in 'communicative on-campus learners' was the reverse of that of 'communicative-authority-oriented distance learners'. Does that mean that there is no positive relationship between the on-campus learners' proficiency levels in English and their abilities to learn English successfully? I am more inclined to believe that this difference in patterns is a result of cognitive style flexibility (Witkin and Goodenough, 1981). This means

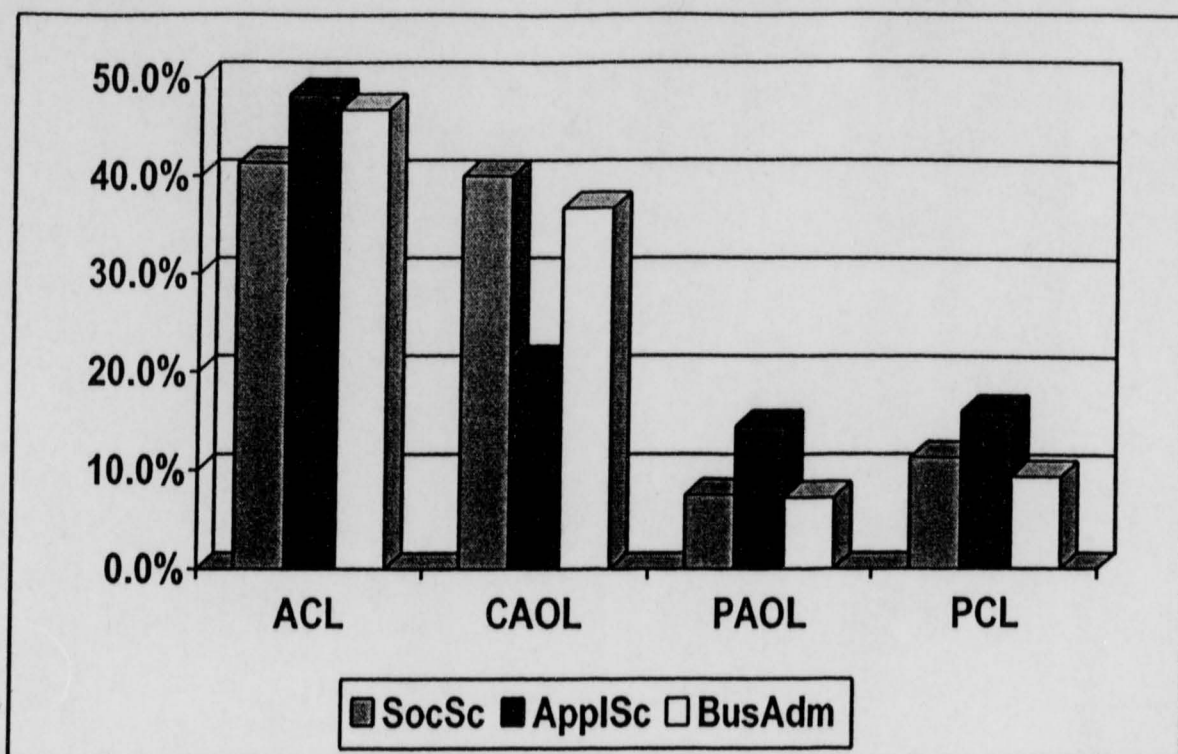


that generally the High Proficiency learners are more 'mobile' than the Low Proficiency learners. These 'mobile' learners will opt for learning styles that they perceive to be leading to more successful learning of English. In a normal classroom environment, they will most probably opt for a more FD learning style (such as classroom interaction) and in a distance learning context, they will probably opt for a more FI style (such as 'analytical-communicative style').

It is not necessary to compare the findings between 'pseudo-authority-oriented distance learners' and 'authority-oriented on-campus learners' as the differences were not pronounced. However, the differences in 'pseudo-concrete learners' are worth considering. The findings suggested that there were more audio-visual learners among the Low Proficiency learners than the High Proficiency learners, in both the distance learners and the on-campus learners. However, since the differences were not that pronounced, not too much weight should be placed on this finding.

### ***Relationship between Disciplines and Learning style groups***

Fig. 6.19 and 6.20 show a breakdown of the distance learners and the on-campus learners respectively into learning style groups according to disciplines. Fig. 6.21 shows a comparison of the learning style groups of the distance learners and the on-campus learners among disciplines.

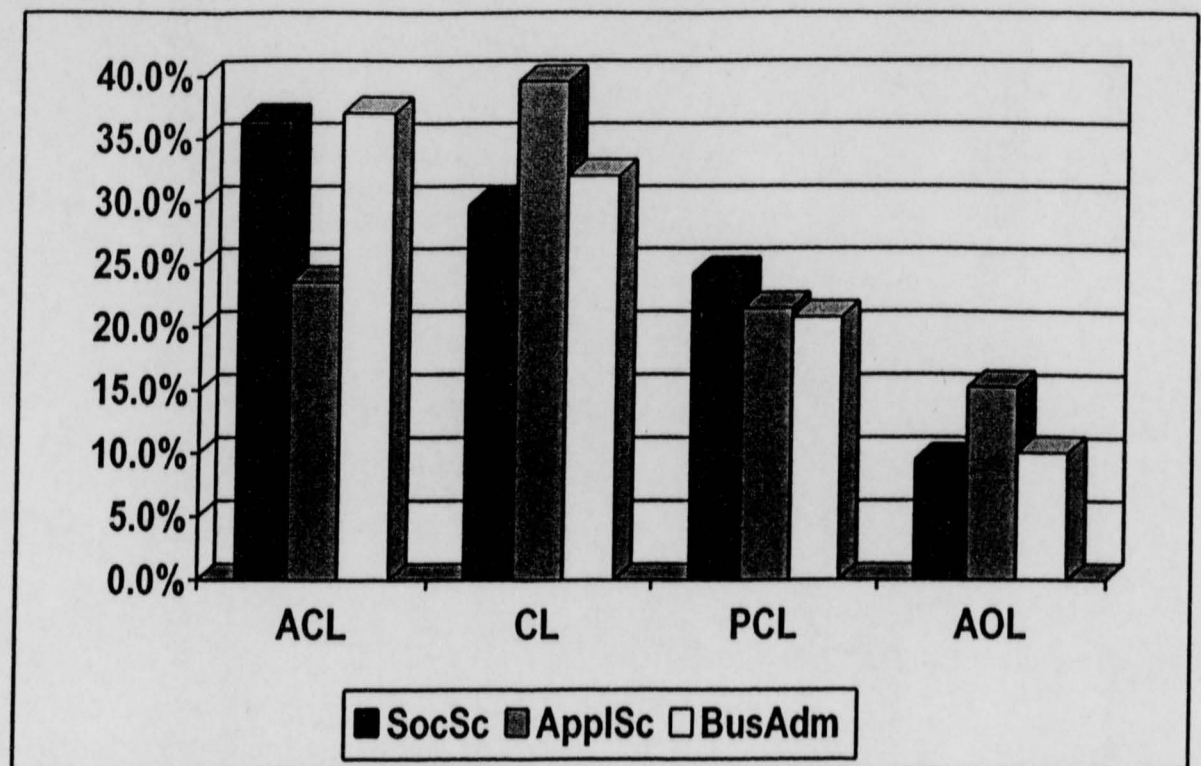


ACL = Analytical communicative learners  
CAOL = Communicative-authority-oriented learners  
PAOL = Pseudo-authority-oriented learners  
PCL = Pseudo-concrete learners

Fig. 6.19 Comparison of learning style groups of distance learners among disciplines

Fig. 6.19 shows that the percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' was the lowest in the distance learners from the SocSc group, and about the same between the distance learners from the ApplSc and BusAdm groups. With regard to 'communicative-authority-oriented learners', the percentage was the lowest in the distance learners from the ApplSc group and about the same between the distance learners from the SocSc and BusAdm groups. As for 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners' and 'pseudo-concrete learners', the highest percentages were from the ApplSc group.

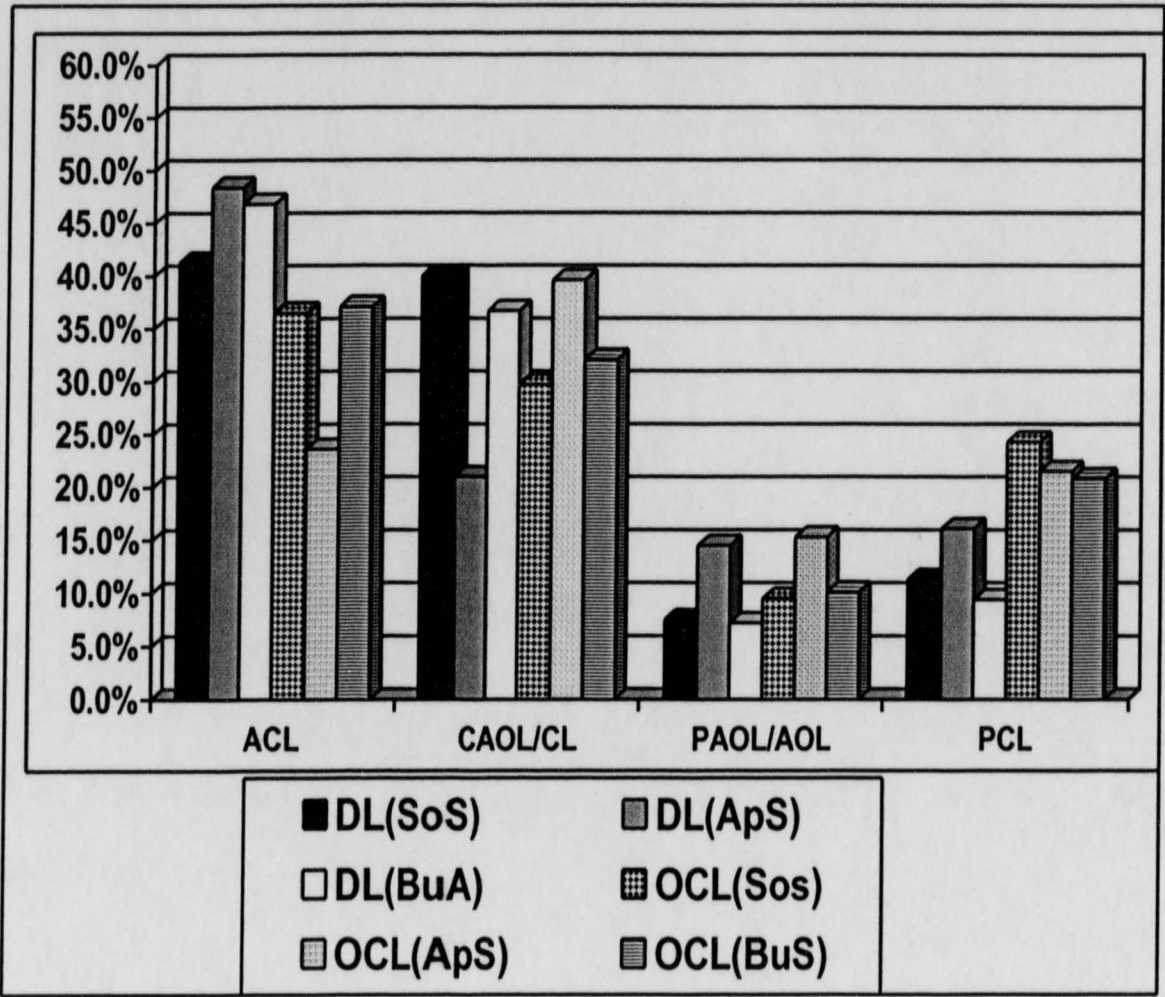




ACL = Analytical communicative learners  
CL = Communicative learners  
PCL = Pseudo-concrete learners  
AOL = Authority-oriented learners

Fig. 6.20 Comparison of learning style groups of on-campus learners among disciplines

Fig. 6.20 shows that the lowest percentage of 'analytical-communicative on-campus learners' was from the ApplSc group. The percentages of 'analytical-communicative on-campus learners' were about the same in the SocSc and BusAdm groups. As for 'communicative on-campus learners', the highest percentage was from the ApplSc group. The percentages in the other two disciplines were almost the same. The percentages of 'pseudo-concrete on-campus learners' were about the same for all three disciplines. As for 'authority-oriented on-campus learners', the percentage of learners from the ApplScs was higher than in the other two disciplines.



ACL = 'analytical-communicative learners'      SoS =Social Science  
CAOL = 'communicative-authority-oriented learners'      ApS = Applied Science  
CL = 'communicative learners'      BuA= Business Administration  
PAOL = 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners'  
AOL = 'authority-oriented learners'  
PCL = 'pseudo-concrete learners'

Fig. 6.21 Comparison of learning style groups of the distance learners and on-campus learners

Fig. 6.21 reveals that in the distance learners, the lowest percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' was from the SocSc group whereas in the on-campus learners, the lowest was from the ApplSc group. On the other hand, the lowest percentage of 'communicative-authority-oriented distance learners' was from the ApplSc group and the highest percentage of 'communicative on-campus learners' was from the ApplSc group. The highest percentages of 'pseudo-authority-oriented distance learners' and 'authority-oriented on-campus learners' were also from the ApplSc group. In addition, the distance learners from the ApplSc group had the highest percentage of 'pseudo-concrete learners' among the three disciplines.



## Discussion of results

The findings revealed that distance learners from the SocSc group had the lowest percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' compared to the other two disciplines. This seemed to suggest that the distance learners from the SocSc group were the least oriented to the learning of English through the distance learning mode compared to the other two disciplines. A further finding revealed that the distance learners from the ApplSc group had the lowest percentage of 'communicative-authority-oriented learners'. This suggested that of the three disciplines, distance learners from the ApplSc group might be most oriented to learning English at a distance.

But the patterns in the on-campus learners were very different. In this case, on-campus learners from the ApplSc group had the lowest percentage of 'analytical-communicative learners' and the highest percentage of 'communicative learners'. I believe this difference can also be attributed to cognitive style flexibility. I decided to investigate further by carrying out a crosstabulation on Disciplines\*Learning styles\*Proficiency levels (See Appendices 6C and 6D). The tables show that the percentages of distance learners from the ApplSc group possessing 'analytical-communicative learners' were about the same in Low Proficiency (52.2%) and Average Proficiency learners (50.0%), but higher in High Proficiency learners (57.1%). In the case of the on-campus learners from the ApplSc group, the percentages were highest in the Low Proficiency learners (32.6%), but lower in the Average Proficiency learners (19.7%) and the High Proficiency learners (22.2%). Generally, one would expect more High Proficiency learners to be analytical-oriented (FI), especially if they are from the Applied Sciences, but this seemed not to be the case in the on-campus learners. What I would like to suggest is that generally there are more 'mobile' learners among the High Proficiency learners from the ApplSc group. These learners will tend to opt for learning styles they consider most suitable to their mode of studying. Based on this argument it would be logical to assume that the High

Proficiency learners from the ApplSc group are likely to be the most 'mobile' of the three disciplines. However, I would like to add that my postulation regarding 'cognitive style flexibility' is interpretative in nature and more in depth research needs be carried out to find out to what extent it is true.

The patterns in 'pseudo-authority-oriented learners', 'authority-oriented learners' and 'pseudo-concrete learners' appeared less clearly defined. However, the finding, did reveal that the percentages of 'pseudo-authority-oriented' and pseudo-concrete' distance learners were the highest in the ApplSc group. Learners belonging to these groups are generally more audio-visual in nature and do not like classroom interaction. They will most likely be able to handle the non-verbal components of language learning more successfully than the verbal components. These characteristics could possibly apply to the distance learners in the ApplSc group who were 'pseudo-authority-oriented' and 'pseudo-concrete'.

### ***Summary of the main findings of the study***

The item analysis revealed that learners in general did not seem to display higher preferences for autonomous and more individualistic styles of learning. The Higher Proficiency learners also did not seem to be more independent and disciplines seemed not to have any effects on preferences either. Thus, it appeared that there were no significant differences arising from differences in modes, proficiency levels and disciplines. However, the results from the item analysis could only identify very general patterns, and there was a need for a more sophisticated tool to identify differences. In view of that, factor analysis was carried out.



The following main findings were derived from the factor analysis.

- The findings revealed that more distance learners were oriented to learning English on their own than on-campus learners. They were able to utilise opportunities in their daily life to interact in English. However, there was still a reasonably high percentage of distance learners who were very dependent on classroom interaction and teachers' directions and guidance. There was also a smaller and less significant group of distance learners who expressed no interest in classroom interaction and were more audio-visual oriented.
- The findings suggested that the High Proficiency distance learners were more oriented to learning English successfully at a distance, and the reverse was true in the case of the Low Proficiency learners. This suggested a positive relationship between the distance learners' proficiency levels in English and their abilities to learn English successfully. This relationship was not evident in case of the on-campus learners. Instead, the findings seemed to suggest the reverse, with the High Proficiency on-campus learners, the most classroom-oriented and the Low Proficiency on-campus learners, the least classroom-oriented.
- The findings suggested that distance learners from the ApplSc group were the most oriented to learning English successfully at a distance, and distance learners from the SocSc group, the least oriented. This pattern appeared not to be evident in the on-campus learners.
- The findings further revealed that the percentage of distance learners inclined to audio-visual learning was the highest from the ApplSc group. These learners would most likely be able to handle the non-verbal components of language learning more successfully than the verbal components.

In my opinion, many of the differences between the distance learners and the on-campus learners can be attributed to cognitive style flexibility. The finding that the distance learners seemed more oriented to learning English independently than the on-campus learners can be attributed to the inclination among more 'mobile' learners (both on-campus and distance learners) to opt for learning styles they consider more appropriate to their mode of learning. This argument can also be used to explain the differences between the learning styles of the High Proficiency distance learners and on-campus learners, and the learning styles of distance learners and on-campus learners from the ApplSc group.

### **6.3.3 Implications of findings to teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context**

The findings suggested a strong possibility that the differences in learning styles between the distance learners and the on-campus learners result from cognitive style flexibility. This means that in designing an ESL distance learning programme it is necessary to ensure that different learning styles of the students are taken into consideration. Besides, teaching through the students' learning styles it also essential to "help the students stretch by learning through alternative styles" (Kinsella, 1995:190). This will be particularly essential for students in the lower proficiency levels. How all these can be done through distance learning will be considered in the final Chapter of this thesis.



# CHAPTER 7

## Study Two

### Conceptions of approaches to studying in general: Focusing on the literature

#### 7.1 Introduction

Entwistle and Ramsden pointed out in 1983 that although there had been an increase in research into higher education in the United Kingdom, little direct attention had been given by researchers to the process of student learning and the effects of teaching on it. However, the situation has changed dramatically in the last two decades, not only in United Kingdom, but also in other parts of the world. My review of literature revealed that there has been an explosion of research into individual differences in student learning. The increase in research tools to investigate student learning has also increased tremendously with the development of various inventories for quantitative research and different methodologies for qualitative research. In the field of investigating approaches to studying quantitatively, the three most widely used inventories are: The Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) developed by Entwistle and colleagues (1983), the Student Processes Questionnaire (SPQ) developed by Biggs (1979) and the Inventory of Learning Processes (ILP) developed by Schmeck et al (1979).

The scales of the SPQ are similar to those of the ASI in many ways, despite the fact that SPQ was developed and validated on samples of students in Australia and Canada, and the ASI on British students. Besides, studies carried out using either of these questionnaires suggested that there appears to be a broad distinction between Surface Approach and Deep Approach which has a certain degree of cross-cultural validity. This brings the two inventories closer together, and reaffirms the validity of both instruments within a defined boundary. With regard to the third inventory, the ILP, there have been serious doubts about its validity. Besides, findings obtained with this instrument were relatively uninformative with regard to the broad distinction between Deep Approach and Surface Approach identified in the SPQ and the ASI (more information regarding the SPQ and ASI will be given later in the chapter).

This study intends to use a revised version of the ASI to investigate the conceptions of approaches to studying of Malaysian ESL distance learners from UKM learning English as L2. A comparison will also be made with the on-campus learners. Although research into student learning has come a long way these last two decades, research into approaches to studying of distance learners is still in its infancy. However, in spite of that, some very interesting trends have been discovered with regard to approaches to studying of distance learners. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

According to Richardson (1987), the systematic investigation of student learning in higher education falls within the area of overlap between two academic disciplines, namely education research on human learning and cognitive psychology. Admittedly there are many differences between these two disciplines (such as those proposed by Richardson, 1987:5-6; Laurillard, 1987:198-207; Eysenck and Piper, 1987:208-213) but the concern of this study is not on these differences. As pointed out by Richardson (1987), it is concerned with how the theories of mainstream educational research can be developed and extended to encompass the specific forms of learning



which are to be found in colleges, polytechnics, and universities on one hand, and applying the models and procedures of cognitive psychology to a specific real-life activity involving complex intellectual feats on the other hand (Richardson, 1987: 3). Since the theory of cognitive psychology has been described in Chapter 3, this chapter will focus on education research that is related to student learning. It will start by describing the works of the major groups of researchers in the field of student learning. Then it will proceed to offer the theoretical rationale for investigating approaches to studying. This will be followed by a review of Entwistle and colleagues' Approaches to Studying Inventory. Events leading to the development of this inventory, development of the pilot studies and a description of the main study will be discussed in depth in this section to provide the necessary theoretical background for this study. Finally, empirical studies undertaken using the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) will be discussed.

## 7.2 Research on student learning in higher education

This section will discuss some of the major groups of researchers whose ideas have predominantly determined the nature about student learning in higher education in the last two decades or so. **The first of these is associated with Perry (1970), who suggested the most often cited study of students' prior experiences of learning and understanding.** Perry (1970: 9-10) conducted a longitudinal study of university students' intellectual development, and identified nine stages of development which can be roughly summarised as comprising three main stages. Students who are in the first main stage have an absolute view of knowledge. They believe that there is one correct or right answer and facts presented by authority are unquestionably correct. Then, they gradually move towards a more relativist view and begin to recognise that

there is a diversity of opinions and uncertainty of answers and come to the decision that all answers are equally valid. Finally, they gradually move to a committed view or understanding, accepting that while there may not be any absolute answers, a commitment to a particular way of seeing and understanding the world needs to be accepted. Perry's scheme is developmental in nature, but it is wrong to assume that all students enter university with absolute views of knowledge and understanding, and leave with more developed views. In reality, this may be true of many cases but not all. In some cases, students may enter with more developed views and leave with the same views or enter with absolute views and leave with the same.

A very similar dimension of intellectual development emerged from Heath's interviews (1964) at Princeton. However, he defined it in terms of an ideal type – the 'reasonable adventurer' – and three distinctive personality types 'the non-committer', 'the hustler', and 'the plunger'. According to him, the contrasting personalities move along different paths towards the intellectual pinnacle already scaled by the reasonable adventurer. These personalities are limited both in their personal relationships and their thinking. For example, the non-committer is over-cautious, while the plunger's "thoughts zip from one idea to another without apparent connection". The reasonable adventurer manages to integrate these apparently contradictory attributes showing:

The combination of two mental attitudes: the curious and the critical. They do not occur simultaneously but in alternation. (The reasonable adventurer) at times is a 'believer' but at other times is a 'skeptic'. The less effective personalities may show tendencies toward one attitude or the other but may not experience the full reach of either.

(Heath, 1964:31)

A limitation of Heath's and Perry's research is the lack of systematic exploration of the ways in which more intellectual mature students approach everyday learning tasks. Saljo's study (1979a, 1979b and 1979c) conducted on the conceptions of learning, or ways of understanding in a more academic setting of adult learners



provided insights into this area. He interviewed a group of adults and found out that one of the main characteristics of people who either had an extended education, or had taken up studying again in adulthood, was the recognition that there are different types of learning appropriate for different sorts of tasks. It appeared that the majority of unsophisticated learners in the sample took for granted that learning involved rote memorisation, whereas those who had experience of higher education saw learning as being thematised according to situations, i.e. 'in learning, alternative strategies or approaches may be useful or suitable in various situations depending on, for example, time available, interest, demands of teachers and anticipated tests' (Saljo, 1979c: 446). These learners' conceptions of learning could be classified under the following categories:

1. A quantitative increase in knowledge
2. Memorising
3. The acquisition, for subsequent utilisation, of facts, methods, etc.
4. The abstraction of meaning
5. An interpretive process aimed at understanding reality.

Prosser and Trigwell (1999:38) claimed that although these ways of conceiving learning do not form a developmental sequence, they are hierarchical in that the later conceptions incorporate and build upon the former. They posited that there is a qualitative shift between the third and fourth ways of conceiving learning. The first three have an external focus – with little or no focus on meaning for the learner – while the last two have a focus on meaning for the learner. Marton et al. (1993) replicated these qualitatively different conceptions in a more recent study with students studying at the Open University in the United Kingdom. In that study, they were able to identify a sixth conception, which they termed 'Changing as a person'. An important question to ask at this juncture is how such differences relate to the way students approach their learning and to the learning outcomes. Prosser and Trigwell (1999) suggested that if students conceive of learning as rote memorisation only, then logically, there is little likelihood that they would focus on meaning and understanding in their study. The reverse will occur if they conceive learning as the

abstraction of meaning. I agree with this reasoning and further propose that learning outcomes arising out of the first situation will be less satisfactory than that arising from the second situation.

The research discussed so far investigated the conception of learning. **The second line of research propagated by Pask attempted to discover important differences between students in their learning strategies.** In these experiments, he deliberately left his instructions about reading the article vague. The students had to decide for themselves whether reading for understanding or rote memorisation would be the best way of answering the subsequent questions about the articles. Through this ambiguity it was possible to demonstrate the contrasting approaches to studying that students considered appropriate for this academic task. In most of Pask's experiments, however, the students were required to reach a deep level of understanding, and Pask was interested in the strategies they used in trying to carry out this instruction.

In the first series of experiments reported by Pask (Pask and Scott, 1972) he asked students to try to establish for themselves the division of two imaginary species of Martian animals – the Clobbits and the Gandlemullers. In the first experiments, information about Clobbits was provided in the form of 50 cards. The cards contained information about the ten subspecies (e.g. habitat, physical characteristics, drawing of animals, etc.) Students were told to turn the cards over one at a time and to give a reason for the particular card they had chosen. Each reason amounted to a hypothesis about the nature of the classification system which the information on the card was expected to test. A record was kept of the order in which the cards were used and also of the hypothesis given at each step. Finally, students were required to 'teachback' to the experimenter what they had learned about these Martian animals. From these experiments, he was able to discover two general categories of learning strategy which can be identified in cognitive tasks: 'Serialists learn, remember and recapitulate a body of information in terms of string-like cognitive structures where



items are related by simple data links.... Holists, on the other hand, learn, remember and recapitulate as a whole' (Pask and Scott, 1972: 218). He then suggested that:

'Some students are disposed to act 'like holists' (comprehension learners) and others 'like Serialists' (operation learners), with more or less success. There are also students able to act in either way, depending upon the subject matter, and if they excel in both pursuits, we refer to those students as versatile. It is these distinctions which can, more appropriately, be referred to as learning style'

(Pask and Scott, 1972:133)

Besides the above two groups, Pask also identified a third group which falls between the two groups. This group consists of students who are readily able to adapt their learning strategy to the requirements of the particular task, emphasising either Comprehension Learning or Operation Learning as appropriate, and using both in tandem, wherever possible. He described these students as having a 'versatile' style of learning.

A student who is versatile is not prone to vacuous Globetrotting; he does indeed build up descriptions of what may be known by a rich use of analogical reasoning, but subjects the hypotheses to test and operationally verifies the validity of an analogy and the limits of its applicability

(Pask et al., 1977 cited by Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:27)

One of Pask's most important experiments was his investigation of the effects of matching and mismatching learning materials with students' learning strategies. Students were identified as having adopted Holist or Serialist strategies by the Clobbits' experiment. They were then asked to work through a set of programmed learning materials and take a test to discover how much they had learned. There were two versions of this material. One was designed to suit the comprehension learner, being rich in analogy and illustration and the other presented a logical, step-by-step sequence without 'enrichment'. Students were assigned to a matched or a mismatched condition (Holist with Holist material; Holist with Serialist material; etc). The results

were dramatic. Although based on small samples; there was a little overlap in the scores of the matched and mismatched groups. The students in the matched conditions were able to answer most of the questions about what they had learned, whereas the other students fell below half marks.

**The third line of research is a series of investigations at Gothenburg, led by Marton (e.g. Marton, 1975; Svensson, 1976; 1977).** The focus of their research looked at one of the main types of learning demanded of students – reading, and understanding academic articles. Marton criticised previous research on prose learning as being too preoccupied with the quantitative outcome of learning (i.e., how many facts and ideas had been remembered), that qualitative aspects of students' understanding of what they had learned were ignored. He also criticised the prose passages for being trivial in content, short or artificially contrived to facilitate experimental control. In his case, he examined students' approaches to reading relatively long (1500 words) passages from actual academic articles. The passages chosen were intelligible without prior technical knowledge of the subject areas, and contained a tight logical argument based on the use of detailed supportive evidence. Students were invited individually, to read the article at their own pace, and in the way they did normally while studying, but they were told that questions about it would be asked afterwards. When students finished reading, they were interviewed to discover what they had learned and how they approached the task.

During the interview, the students were encouraged through neutral questioning, to elaborate what they had remembered. They were then asked more specific questions about sections of the text, followed by another general question, with probes, to discover how they had interpreted the instruction to read the article, what their intention was in approaching the task (what they expected to get from the article), and how the experimental situation had affected them (whether they were anxious, for example). Finally, in some of their studies, questions were asked about their normal approach to studying.



In a sense the approach to analysis described is similar to the development of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). No explicit theoretical framework was imposed on the data. The responses were examined looking for important consistencies within each transcript on its own, then patterns of response recurring across the interviews were identified (Svensson, 1976). Finally, exploratory constructs were hypothesised to facilitate understanding of the students' approaches to studying and levels of outcome (what they remembered).

Following this analytic procedure Marton and his colleagues were able to describe important regularities both in the qualitatively different outcomes of learning (what students were able to recall about the articles) and their approaches to studying. They found that it was usually possible to identify the following four types of responses in spite of the fact that the outcome of learning depended on the particular article read (Fransson, 1977; Saljo, 1975).

A. Conclusion-orientated, detailed The student summarised the author's main argument, showed how evidence was used to support the argument, and explained the thought and reflections used to reach personal understanding of that argument.

B. Conclusion-orientated, mentioning

Again there was an adequate summary of the main argument, but the use of evidence or personal experience to support was not made clear.

C. Description, detailed

The student gave an adequate list of the main points in the article, but failed to show how these were developed into an argument.

#### D. Description, mentioning

A few isolated points were made, some relevant, others irrelevant. At the bottom end of this category an impression of confusion and misunderstanding was given by the student's comments.

They were able to divide students into two categories based on their approach to, and process of reading the article. They found that some students adopted a **Deep Approach**. They started with the intention of understanding the meaning of the article, interacted actively with the authors' arguments (relating them to previous knowledge and their own experience) and tried to see what extent the author's conclusions were justified by the evidence presented. Other students seemed to rely almost exclusively on a **Surface Approach**. Their intent was to memorise the parts of the information they considered to be important, guided by the type of questions they anticipated being asked subsequently. These students were thus constrained by the specific task requirements, and anxious about that constraint. While these descriptions were clearly ideal types and few students showed all the characteristics attributed to either type, it was possible to arrive at inter-rater reliability for most, and sometimes even all students on assigning them to one or other category on the basis of one of the main defining features.

Svensson (1976) independently read the transcripts and although his categorisation coincided closely with that of Marton, he used different terminology. His categories were 'holistic' and 'atomistic' which represented different ways in which students organised or structured their responses in describing what they remembered. The 'holistic' approach was described as involving the integration of the main parts into a structured whole. The 'atomistic' approach was described as concentrating on aggregating the parts without interrelating or integrating them.



Studies in Gothenburg also examined the link between a student's approach to learning in the experiment and the normal approach to studying. Svensson (1977) was able to detect Deep and Surface Approaches to normal studying and to compare these both with the experiment and with the examination performance of the students at the end of their first year. His results showed that 23 out of 30 students used the same approach in the experiment and in normal studying. Of the students classified as using the Deep Approach in both, 90 percent had passed all the examinations, while only 23 per cent of those using surface approach in both, had this level of success.

Svensson also reported that students who adopted a Deep Approach also tended to spend longer hours studying. To me, this seems like a foregone conclusion. Students who study their subjects deeply, are understandably, more likely to find the material more interesting and easier to understand, and the reverse applies to those who use the Surface Approach. In another study, Marton and Saljo (1976b) were interested in whether the students' approaches to studying were affected by the type of questions they were given in tests. They used two comparable groups of students and three separate passages of prose. The students were asked to read each of these passages, and after each passage they were asked a series of questions. After each of the first two passages, one group was given questions designed to encourage a Deep Approach (attention to the underlying meaning), whereas the other group was given specific factual questions. But after the third passage both groups of students were given the same set of questions containing both 'deep' and 'surface' questions. They found that students belonging to the 'surface group', who were given questions designed to encourage a Deep Approach, and subsequently adopted a Deep Approach, tended to have shifted back to a surface approach by the time they read the third passage. On the other hand, most of the students (both from 'surface group' and 'deep group') given questions designed to encourage a surface approach found it difficult to move fully to a Deep Approach, although some from the 'deep group' managed to revert back to Deep Approach. He concluded that it was much easier to induce a surface approach than a deep one.

Another of Marton's colleagues examined the level of understanding of basic concepts reached by first-year students of economics. Dahlgren (1978) in his study on economics students asked his subjects to explain "Why does a bun cost one crown?" He was able to identify two qualitatively different explanations, representing two qualitatively different conceptions:

- A. The price is dependent on the relationship between the supply and demand for buns.
- B. The price is equal to the (true) value of the bun

According to Dahlgren, Conception B represents the more everyday way of thinking about price, while Conception A is the more economically appropriate way. In his longitudinal study, he found substantial variation in their conception of price, both on a pre-test and on a post-test, with little change from pre-test to post-test. His study showed that many students entered the subject with everyday, but not economically valid, conception of price, and left it with similar conception. He contributed this lack of understanding of basic concepts to students resorting to reproducing answers by well-rehearsed methods, in order to cope with the overwhelming curricula and to pass examinations.

In many of the reports produced by the Gothenburg research group, there was also a repeated emphasis on the importance of both content and context in affecting a student's approach to studying besides the nature of the task concerned. In one such study, Fransson (1977) revealed that levels of interest and anxiety affected students' approaches to studying. Level of interest was controlled by selecting an article concerning examination procedures in the education department. One group was from that department; another group, from another department, was expected to have much less interest in the article. Two situations, or two contexts for learning, were created. In one condition, students were told after reading the article that one student



would be chosen to explain aloud what he had learnt. The explanation would be tape-recorded for subsequent detailed analysis. A large tape-recorder was placed in a prominent position to reinforce what was intended to be an anxiety reinforced situation. In the contrasting situation, attempts were made to create a relaxed friendly atmosphere.

The results showed that interest and anxiety did affect students' approaches to studying. It was not so much that anxiety-provoking situations induced a Surface Approach to studying, but that students who felt the situation to be threatening, whether that was intended or not, were more likely to adopt a Surface Approach. Lack of interest or perceived relevance also tended to evoke mechanical rote-learning approach.

As can be seen there is a fair amount of overlap between the work of these groups of researchers. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983: 28) pointed out that Pask's descriptions of styles and pathologies of learning seemed to overlap, in places, with Marton's ideas about deep and Surface Approaches to studying. These connections were intriguing and led to greater interest in student learning. Pask and Marton's work was the impetus to Entwistle and Ramsden's work on student learning. However, Entwistle and Ramsden's approach was deliberately different. They used both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting and analysing data, as a progression from the earlier research at Lancaster. Their work included an exploration of the effects of natural contextual differences – differences between academic departments – in their effects on approaches to studying.

One of the prominent results of their work was the development of an inventory known as Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI). This inventory composes of four main scales, each with several sub-scales. This will be discussed later in Section 7.4. At the same time in Australia, Biggs (1979) was developing his Study Process

Questionnaire comprising three scales with two sub-scales in each scale. He termed the three scales reproducing, internalising and organising but now they are called Surface Approach, Deep Approach and Achieving Approach. Each of these composed of an intention or motive sub-scale and a strategy sub-scale. This similarity between the main factors in Biggs' inventory and Entwistle is astonishing considering that they were describing students in terms of a different inventory and within a different educational system. The present Study has drawn substantially on the work of Entwistle and Ramsden and the inventory used was a revised version of Entwistle's inventory. In addition, the methods of analysing data used replicate that of Entwistle and Ramsden's to a large extent. In view of that it is necessary to describe the development of Entwistle's inventory and the revised version of his inventory in greater detail. Before I embark on that I would like to discuss the theoretical rationale for investigating approaches to studying in this thesis.

### **7.3 Theoretical rationale for investigating approaches to studying**

Research into students' orientations and approaches to studying from the student learning perspective can be viewed from two separate origins. One is more qualitative and focuses on the relational response of students to particular learning tasks (Marton, Saljo), the other more quantitative and focuses on students' more stable orientations to learning (Entwistle, Biggs). Prosser and Trigwell (1999) used three terms to describe the concepts involved. They are:

1. An approach to learning in a current task;
2. An approach to learning in a prior experience of learning in a similar task;
3. A prior orientation to learning (a general study process)



The following situation described by them will give a better idea of what each term entails:

a student may enter a subject having generally adopted a Deep Approach to studying that subject matter in a secondary school, but on entering university may feel very anxious about his/her ability to cope in a new situation, and so immediately adopts a Surface Approach. In this case, we would say that the students' **prior orientation to learning** was deep, but **prior approach to learning** was surface. It then remains to be seen what approach the student adopts for various tasks during the course – this we would term his/her **approach to learning those tasks** in the subject.

(Prosser and Trigwell, 1999:39)

This suggests to me that if we attempt to find out students' approach to learning by giving them a task to perform in a test situation, what we may be getting may be their prior approach to learning a task and not their prior orientation to learning. Research that investigated how students approach academic texts (see for e.g. Bartlett, 1932; Marton 1975) and how students approach test questions (see for e.g. Marton and Saljo, 1976a and 1976b) has the likelihood of falling into this category as the approach manifested by the students may be applicable to performing that particular task under a certain condition.

In my opinion it is more crucial to find out about a learner's prior orientation to learning than prior approach to learning. Prior orientation to learning has been described as 'reasonably stable culmination of their previous experiences of studying generally' (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999:39) and as 'more stable, individual variables' (Vermunt, 1998). Kember and Gow's study (1990), which found that students in higher education exhibit a degree of consistency across different learning tasks, lends further support to this definition.

Marton and Saljo (1976b) found that a person whose prior orientation to learning was a Surface Approach would generally not be able to change to a Deep Approach when confronted with tasks that demanded such a approach and, even if he/she managed to do so, it would be a temporary phenomenon. On the other hand, a person whose prior orientation was a Deep Approach might use a Surface Approach initially, possibility due to factors such as anxiety and pressure of course work and examination, or might be the task confronting him/her did not need a Deep Approach. However, he/she might be able to revert to a Deep Approach. Vermetten et al. (1999) described this interaction between a student's new experiences and the (changing) learning environment as 'cognitive disequilibrium' (p. 24). Thus, it is evident here that a student's orientation to learning may be influence by the context, content and the demands of the learning situation. On top of that, personological factors such as motivation also come into play (see for e.g. Brown 1987; Ramsden, 1988; Vermunt, 1996, 1998; Vermetten, 1999).

However, as pointed out earlier, prior orientation is relatively stable and a person can revert back to his/her original orientation. In view of that it is logical that I have chosen to investigate it since my intention is to devise a strategy for developing a distance learning ESL programme. In a nutshell, Study two intends to investigate learners' prior orientation to learning in general, which I will define as approaches that a learner adopts in learning in a specific learning environment. These underlying approaches are relatively stable and do not vary from task to task but they do vary due to exposure to a certain type of learning environment or interplay of the environmental and personological factors for a certain period of time. In other words, learners will utilise these approaches to learn all subjects (both content and proficiency courses) unless influenced by the above-mentioned factors. However, I will not be referring to these approaches as 'prior orientation to learning', but have classified them as '**approaches to studying**' (like Entwistle did).



## 7.4 Entwistle and colleagues' Approaches to Study Inventory

### 7.4.1 Events leading to its development

In an earlier research at Lancaster (Entwistle and Wilson, 1970; Entwistle and Entwistle, 1970; Entwistle et al., 1974; Entwistle and Wilson, 1977), a series of inventories had been developed, initially for the specific purpose of predicting subsequent levels of academic performance. In the main study an inventory with two scales was used – motivation and study methods. One of the versions of the inventory contained items indicative of extroversion and neuroticism (Eysenck, 1970). In a related study by Wilson (in Entwistle and Wilson, 1977), it was found that extroverts who had high scores on motivation and study methods were equally as successful as introverts with comparable scores. This finding contradicted many such studies which have consistently found that introverts in most subjects tend to be more successful than extroverts. Although this earlier work was not designed to examine study processes, it did indicate that students of differing personality types might approach studying in contrasting ways. This possibility was explored further by the use of cluster analysis. Through this procedure Entwistle and Wilson, 1977 managed to identify four groups of learners:

1. The first group was outstandingly successful and was apparently motivated by ambition or 'hope of success'.
2. The second group was in many ways the opposite of the first, yet still obtained fairly good degree results.
3. The third group of students was also successful. They were highly motivated, had good study methods, worked long hours, but were distinctly syllabus-free in their attitude to studying.

4. This group contained the least successful students. This group had active social or sporting interests combined with very low motivation, poor study methods, and few hours spent studying.

Factor analyses were also used to identify differing attitudes to studying. Through this method the initial two dimensions of motivation and study methods were broken down into five sub-scales which paralleled the cluster analyses. The four most distinctive items from each factor are shown in Fig.7.1, and these items formed the first part of the pool of items used to develop the 'Approaches to Studying Inventory'.

<b>Disorganised and Dilatory</b>	<b>(Poor degree results)</b>
1. My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of the term.	
2. I'm rather slow at starting work in the evening.	
3. It's rather difficult for me to organise my study time: at school this was done for me.	
4. It is unusual for me to be late handling in work (Disagree)	
<b>Cynical and Disenchanted</b>	<b>(Poor degree results)</b>
1. I can't see any relevance to most of the work we do here.	
2. There seems to be little point in following up the references we are given in lectures.	
3. There are very few of the recommended textbooks which are really worth buying.	
4. I sometimes wish I had gone straight into work after school.	



<b>Syllabus-free</b>	<b>(Above average degree results)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I tend to learn more effectively by studying along my own lines than through set work.</li> <li>2. I am often involved in following up my own ideas when I am supposed to be doing set work.</li> <li>3. Often I try to think of a better way of doing something than is described in a lecture or book.</li> <li>4. I should prefer the set work to be less structured and organised</li> </ol>	
<b>Fear of Failure</b>	<b>(Above average degree results)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My friends always seem to be able to do things better than me.</li> <li>2. Worrying about an exam or about work that is overdue often prevents me from sleeping.</li> <li>3. I get very concerned about work which is overdue.</li> <li>4. I don't often join in tutorial discussions: I prefer to listen.</li> </ol>	
<b>Competitive and Efficient</b>	<b>(Very good degree results)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I play any game to win, not just for the fun of it.</li> <li>2. I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters.</li> <li>3. It's important for me to do really well in the courses here.</li> <li>4. I consider the best possible way of learning is by completing the set work and doing required reading.</li> </ol>	

Fig. 7.1 Students' attitudes to studying: The four most distinctive items from each factor (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:36-37)

## 7.4.2 Development of Pilot Inventories

Entwistle and Ramsden's purpose in developing a new inventory was an attempt to understand students' approaches to studying, particularly, to investigate the inter-relationships between the explanatory concepts identified by Marton and Pask. In view of that they wrote additional items based on Marton's descriptions of 'deep' and 'surface' processing and Pask's indications of the varying learning strategies used by 'holists' and 'serialists'. In addition, they created an additional set of items based on

the ideas of Miller and Partlett (1974) on 'cue consciousness' which were modified by Ramsden (1979) into a more general dimension of 'Strategic Approach to assessment'. Additional items were added based on interview with the students. Eventually a pool of 120 items was used in their first pilot inventory. Alpha factor analysis with rotation to oblique simple structure (Nie et al, 1975) was used to identify groups of items which were consistently linked together. The items were also subjected to conceptual analysis in relation to the constructs found in the literature. The analysis revealed two major factors: 'Deep Approaches to Studying' and 'Organised, motivated study methods'. A third factor brought together surface processing with Fear of Failure and Syllabus-boundedness.

At this time Entwistle and Ramsden discovered many similarities between the scales in his inventory and that of Biggs'. For example, Biggs' three main factors –utilising, internalising and achieving (see Fig.7.2 for a description of the three factors) were similar in characteristics to the ones emerging from the Entwistle and Ramsden's first pilot inventory.

Factor	Cognitive	Motivational
Utilising	Fact-rote Strategy	Extrinsic, Fear of Failure
Internalising	Meaning Assimilation	Intrinsic
Achieving	Study Skills and Organisation	Need for Achievement

Fig. 7.2 The three main factors of Biggs' Inventory

In view of that, they decided to bring the inventories even closer together by introducing additional items covering scales used by Biggs, but not parallel in their inventory –Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Internality and Openness.



The second inventory contained the 82 items from the first inventory most clearly related to established factors, together with 24 items rewritten from the four scales developed by Biggs. Through factor analysis, they were able to obtain four factors (see Appendix 7A for the subscales and factors that emerged).

This pilot inventory was given to 767 first year (second term) students from nine departments in two universities. The disciplines covered were English, History, Psychology, Physics, and Engineering. Principal component factor analyses, with rotation to oblique simple structure, were used to investigate the inter-relationships between the sub-scales. Four factors had eigenvalues above unity and these explained 56% of the overall variance in the correlational matrix.

The four factors identified were:

1. Deep Approach/Comprehension Learning or Meaning Orientation
2. Surface Approach/Operation Learning or Reproducing Orientation
3. Organised Study Methods and Achieving Orientation
4. Stable Extraversion

As the subscales of internality and openness seemed to add little to the definition of the first factor, they were dropped from subsequent versions of the inventory. The isolated personality dimension of sociability was also dropped. In their place, it was decided to introduce sub-components of the main explanatory concepts being investigated.

In the third pilot version of the inventory, a distinction was made within approaches to studying between the intention, the process, and the outcome. Also the styles of learning, Comprehension Learning and Operation Learning, both of which Pask considered to be essential in reaching understanding, were distinguished from their

corresponding pathologies – Globetrotting and Improvidence (see Appendix 7B for definitions of terms). Holists are likely to exhibit both Comprehension Learning and Globetrotting; Serialists should score highly on Operation Learning and Improvidence. However, students adopting a Deep Approach, although being able to use both Comprehension and Operation Learning in a versatile manner, would not be expected to exhibit these pathologies of learning.

One of the main problems in developing the inventory had been due to the continuous evolution of the theoretical constructs identified by Marton and Pask during the life of the programme. The third inventory had a short life. It was rapidly replaced by the another version named as final research version of the inventory, due to the development of a model of student learning by Entwistle, Hanley and Hounsell (1979) (see Appendix 7C for the model). This final version restricted 'Deep Approach' to the intention to understand and an active critical approach to learning, and added as separate subscales two of the components essential to deep level outcome, but not previously covered in the inventory. These sub-scales were labelled 'Relating Ideas' and 'Use of Evidence'. In order to arrive at the final version, all items from previous inventories which had worked well at some stage within one or other of the sub-scales now to be formed, were identified. Each sub-scale, with the exception of Surface Approach, which had proved the most difficult to define, was limited to a maximum of four items to ensure a manageable overall length on the basis of the highest correlations between item and sub-scale total, consistent with retaining the conceptual definition of the sub-scales (see Appendix 7D for the subscales and items in them). The coefficients of internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) were determined to identify the reliability of the classification. It was found that the coefficients for the main domains were sufficiently high except for the styles and pathologies domain: Meaning Orientation (16 items  $\alpha = 0.79$ ); Reproducing Orientation (16 items;  $\alpha = 0.73$ ); Achieving Orientation ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ); Styles and Pathologies (16 items;  $\alpha = 0.59$ ). They explained that the lower reliability for the fourth domain was reasonable for it was unlikely that styles and pathologies could be



viewed as a single domain. They suggested the putting together of the subscales in the fourth domain in different ways for different purposes (see Appendix 7D).

### **7.4.3 Main study undertaken by Entwistle and colleagues**

The approaches to studying inventory was presented to students as a questionnaire in three sections. The first section asked for background information about school examination results and honours specialism(s), and also contained a self-rating questionnaire in which students were asked to assess their own academic progress to date (How well do you think you are doing so far on this subject/course, compared to other students?). The second section contained the inventory of Approaches to Studying, while the final section was the Course Perceptions Questionnaire.

171 departments in universities and polytechnics in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were approached to participate in this investigation but only 95 agreed in principle to participate, and out of these 95, only 66 of them submitted an adequate proportion of completed questionnaires for analysis. The target population was second year undergraduates (third-year in Scotland), taking honours degree in English, History, Economics, Psychology, Physics or Engineering. The six disciplines were chosen to provide a range of specialisms.

Completed questionnaires were obtained from 2208 students, an estimated response rate of 73%. Students were asked to give their names (to allow degree results to be obtained subsequently), and the questionnaires were returned to the investigators in sealed envelopes, with a guarantee that the response had not been seen by the departmental staff. The final sample contained 16 Arts departments (491 students), 26 in the Social Sciences (852), and 24 in the Pure and Applied Sciences (865).

### 7.4.3.1 Results of the study

The results obtained by Entwistle and colleagues fell into two categories: (1) relationship between approaches to studying and academic progress and (2) relationship between approaches to studying. Although this thesis does not touch on (1), it is still of interest to know about this relationship, especially since my thesis deals with learners of different proficiency levels. It is not possible to equate difference in academic progress to difference in proficiency levels. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two cannot be denied. Understandably, students of higher proficiency levels would be expected to perform better academically than students of lower proficiency levels, particularly in language learning.

In their study, Entwistle and colleagues were able to investigate correlations between the inventory sub-scales and the self-rating of academic progress in the second year (see Appendix 7E). The correlations with the British students' self-rating of academic progress by subject area, showed consistent relationships in the expected directions. The closest overall relationships with Academic Progress were found with Organised Study Methods and Positive Attitudes to Studying, followed by Intrinsic Motivation, Deep Approach, and Syllabus-freedom (changing the names to indicate the direction of relationship). Subject area differences showed academic progress in Arts to be more closely related positively to Deep Approach and Comprehension Learning, and negatively to all the sub-scales within the Reproducing Orientation, and to Operation Learning and Improvidence. In Social Sciences, higher positive correlations were found with Relating Ideas, Intrinsic Motivation, and higher negative correlations with Disorganised Study Methods and negative attitudes. Social Science students appeared not to suffer academically for the Pathologies of Learning or adopting a Surface Approach. The relationships in Science followed the overall values fairly closely with the exception of Strategic Approach and Disorganised Study Methods, which showed closer relationships with Progress, and Operation Learning, which seemed to be more of a benefit in the Sciences.



Entwistle and colleagues also compared their self-rating correlations with samples of Australian first-year students who had been involved in the final research of the inventory. They found a lower level of correlation in the Australian samples. They attributed these differences to the objectivity of the index of academic performance (thus avoiding the possible circularity in comparing two sets of self-ratings), or by the difference between first, and second-year students. However, the pattern of relationships was very similar, the only exceptions being that Australian Science students showed a negative relationship with Operation Learning, and that Improvidence was more heavily penalised in Sciences than in the Arts.

Entwistle and colleagues also used discriminant function analysis to determine which sub-scales were able to predict academic progress most effectively. In this statistical technique, groups are formed on the basis of a criterion (here academic performance). The analysis then identifies a discriminant function which shows which combination of the predictive variables (sub-scales of the inventory) most clearly differentiates between the different criterion groups. In the main study two extreme groups were formed in terms of students who said they were doing 'very well' in their courses (N=58), and those who said they were performing 'badly' (N=43). They found that the sub-scales which defined the discriminant function most clearly were Organised Study Methods, Positive Attitudes to Studying, a Strategic Approach, and to (a lesser extent) high scores on Achievement Motivation and Deep Approach, combined with low scores on Surface Approach and Globetrotting. This function placed students correctly in their achievement category in 90% of instances. However, they acknowledged that this level of prediction was likely to be an overestimate, due to the circularity involved in using self-ratings of both progress and approaches to studying.

### 7.4.3.2 Relationships between approaches to studying

The overall patterns of relationship could be seen through factor analysis. The SPSS program was used by Entwistle and colleagues to carry out principal analysis, followed by rotation to oblique simple structure. Four factors with eigenvalues greater than one were identified. They accounted for 55% of the variance. The factor loadings are shown in Fig. 7.3

Variables	Factors			
	I	II	III	IV
<u>Academic Performance (Achievement)</u>				
School	(-02)	(-13)	(-15)	(-07)
Higher Education	31	-26	-39	(19)
<u>Approaches to Studying</u>				
Deep Approach (DA)	70			(22)
Inter-relating Ideas (RI)	65			
Use of Evidence (UE)	54			(23)
Intrinsic Motivation (IM)	72		-25	
Surface Approach (SA)		57	36	30
Syllabus-boundedness (SB)	-41	58		(24)
Fear of Failure (FF)		50	34	
Extrinsic Motivation (EM)	-25	38		53
Strategic Approach (ST)	29			48
Disorganised Study Methods (DS)	-25			
Negative Attitudes to Studying (NA)	-39			
Achievement Motivation (AM)	(24)			45
Comprehension Learning (CL)	55	(-24)	30	
Globetrotting (GL)			52	
Operation Learning (OL)		62		44
Improvvidence (IP)		68	(24)	26

Note: Decimal points and most loadings less than 0.25 omitted.

Fig. 7.3 Factor analysis of Approaches to Studying scales (N=2208) (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:49)



The first two factors were almost identical to those previously described as Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation. Again both factors showed a strong stylistic component. However, Meaning Orientation, unlike Reproducing Orientation, contained no element of pathology in its loadings. The previous third factor of Achieving Orientation was divided into two. Factor III had its highest loading on Disorganised Study Methods and Negative Attitudes to Studying, a factor which emerged from the earlier inventory of motivation and study methods (Entwistle, 1975). This factor, which can be seen as a Non-academic Orientation to Studying, represents Disorganised and Dilatory Approaches to Studying. Factor IV was closer to the previous Achieving Orientation with high loadings on Strategic Approach and both Extrinsic and Achievement Motivations. There was also an apparent readiness to adopt either Deep or Surface Approaches, which was consistent with a previous finding in a study by Entwistle, Hanley and Hounsell (1979). Entwistle and colleagues attributed this to students, in their desire to achieve higher grades, using whichever method – either meaningful or rote learning – that seemed to produce the best results. Some expected results include: Factor III (Non-academic Orientation) showed the highest negative loading of self-rating of Academic Progress; Meaning Orientation was positively related to achievement i.e., Academic Performance while the Reproducing Orientation showed a negative relationship. A surprising result was that the Achieving Orientation itself showed only a slight association with the self-rating academic progress. Entwistle and colleagues cautioned against accepting all these results and suggested that the re-examination of these relationships, with a more satisfactory criterion of achievement (such as formal degree results).

#### 7.4.4 Further Development work on the inventory

The publication of an article describing results from the second pilot inventory (Entwistle, Hanley and Hounsell, 1979) led to the final version being used in its original form or in a slightly amended form. Studies at the Open University

(Morgan, Gibbs and Taylor, 1980), the Australian National University (Watkins, 1982) and in Holland and Belgium (Van Rossum cited by Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) favoured the amended form.

In the Open University study, Meaning Orientation emerged as clearly as in Entwistle and colleagues' analyses but there was overlap between Reproducing Orientation, Achieving Orientation and Styles and Pathologies. As a result of their own analyses and those from the Open University, Entwistle and colleagues decided to carry out a reassessment of their sub-scales. They applied alpha factor analysis to the data from the main study (N=2208) and managed to extract 17 factors (to allow for 16 factors and the freedom to rotate created by an additional factor). They also produced a five-factor solution to examine membership of domains, and this was repeated for each of the six disciplines separately. The 17 factors solution managed to produce few identifiable groupings of items. The results from the 5 factor solutions were more useful (see Fig. 7.4)



Grouping of Sub-Scales	English (n=282)	History (209)	Economics (450)	Psychology (402)	Physics (357)	Engineering (508)	Total Sample
Meaning Orientation (DA + CL + RI + UE) (also IM)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reproducing Orientation (SA + IP + FF + SB) (also OL)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Non-academic Orientation (DS + NA + GL) (also -IM and -AM)	X	X	X (two factors)	X	X	X (two factors)	X
Holist Style (CL + GL)		X			X		
Serialist Style (OL + IM)					X		
Academic Motivation (AM + IM)	X			X			X
Instrumental Motivation (AM + EM)		X					X
Non-Academic Motivation (EM + C* -- IM)	X		X	X		X	

\*C = maximum score on IM subscale (16)

DA = Deep Approach

RI = Inter-relating Ideas

UE = Use of Evidence

IM = Intrinsic Motivation

SA = Surface Approach

SB = Syllabus-boundedness

FF = Fear of Failure

EM = Extrinsic Motivation

ST = Strategic Approach

DS = Disorganised Study Methods

NA = Negative Attitudes to Studying

AM = Achievement Motivation

CL = Comprehension Learning

GL = Globetrotting

OL = Operation Learning

IP = Improvidence

Fig. 7.4 Summary of item factor analyses

(Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:52)

Again the two main orientations that were clear-cut and identifiable in every discipline, were Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation. The clarity of the interpretation was blurred somewhat where a separate style factor was created in the case of history and physics. But, on the whole it was found sensible to describe the Meaning Orientation as 'Deep Approach' and the Reproducing Orientation as 'Surface, Instrumental Approach'. Entwistle and colleagues were also pleased to find empirical evidence to support their conviction that Operation Learning should not necessarily become a surface instrumental strategy considering it emphasises a cautious, logical, controlled, approach closely reliant on fact and detail.

The third main factor again differed from the Achieving Orientation described previously. Like the previous analyses, Disorganised Study Methods and Negative Attitudes were linked in most analyses (although they could be separated into distinct factors). However, unlike the previous analyses where Achievement Motivation was associated with both Strategic Approach and Intrinsic Motivation, in this case, Motivation appeared to be divided into four distinct sub-scales: Achievement, Extrinsic, Intrinsic and Social. Again, in some analyses, 'Academic Motivation, the combination of Achievement and Intrinsic Motivation, was also related to Strategic Approach. This combination was commonly associated with elements of both Deep and Surface Approaches – thus describing the separate 'Achieving Orientation' found previously.

From the analyses, Entwistle and colleagues came to the conclusion that there were four distinctive orientations to studying which could be identified empirically from the inventory and that these orientations could be associated with characteristic forms of motivation, as suggested by Biggs:



Orientation	Motivation
Meaning Orientation (DA + CL + RI + UE)	Intrinsic (IM)
Reproducing Orientation (SA + IP + FF + SB)	Extrinsic and/or Fear of Failure (EM)
Achieving Orientation (AM + IM + ST)	Achievement
Non-Academic Orientation (DA + NA + GL)	Low levels of Intrinsic combined with high Extrinsic and/or Social Motivation

(Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:52)

These orientations were found to correlate with academic progress. Consistently higher correlations were found with Non-academic and Achieving Orientations. A subject area difference was also found. Meaning Orientation was found to be more effective and Reproducing Orientation (and Serialist style) were found to be more heavily penalised in Arts than Science. The Holist was unrelated to achievement in any discipline, as was the Serialist style in Science and Social Sciences.

Entwistle and colleagues used a simplified version of this inventory on a group of 51 pupils taking 'A' levels examination (16 +). They were able to find in this small sample and using a much-abbreviated inventory, a similar pattern of results. In a later section more recent relevant empirical studies will be discussed.

The development of the ASI inventory has been described in great detail to demonstrate that a laborious and vigorous process was involved in its development, thus lending credibility and reliability to the instrument that was produced. The inventory, was later revised, modified and adapted by various researchers to meet specific needs. However, in spite of the changes, the main domains of the instrument

still remain. In the next section I will proceed to discuss other empirical studies undertaken using the ASI.

## 7.5 Empirical studies on approaches to studying

### 7.5.1 Introduction

The ASI devised by Entwistle and colleagues in the United Kingdom (Entwistle, Hanley and Hounsell, 1979; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Ramsden and Entwistle, 1981) is perhaps the most widely used questionnaire on student learning. There are many edited versions of this questionnaire, like the one which I based my present study on. In view of that, it is not possible to describe all these studies. Thus in the section that follows, I will only review and discuss studies of direct relevance to this Study. In the first section, I will first review the three major studies that compared the approaches to studying of distance learning students with campus-based students undertaken by Morgan et al. (1980), Harper and Kembar (1986) and Richardson (1999). In the second section, I will draw upon literature that describes the patterns of similarities between approaches to studying of learners from the two modes of learning. Next, a review of literature on the background variables affecting the approaches to studying will be undertaken. This will include my attempt to identify the background variables responsible for the patterns identified. Finally, a summary of the main findings of the reviewed studies will be given.



### **7.5.2 Review of studies that compare approaches of studying of distance learning students and campus-based students**

To my best knowledge, the first study on approaches to studying of distance learners was carried out by Morgan et al.(1980). They were interested to find out whether the approaches to studying of students following courses with the British Open University were the same as those identified by Entwistle and colleagues. The courses used in their study were the same as those identified by Entwistle and colleagues. However, they were offered by part-time distance learning (using specially prepared correspondence materials, plus television and radio broadcasts) with tutorial support at a local level. The ASI was modified to make it suitable for a distance learning context and given to 357 students at residential summer schools for foundation courses in the Social Sciences and Technology. Factor analysis of the data on the sixteen sub-scales was carried out with the SPSS programme (Nie et al, 1975), using alpha factor analysis with rotation to oblique simple structure. The exercise yielded two interpretable factors representing Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation, respectively. These two factors were the same as those identified by Entwistle et al., although the order in which the factors occurred (i.e. the % of variance explained by each factor) was slightly different. Another difference detected was that for conventional students (in Entwistle and colleagues' studies), Reproducing Orientation (Factor II) included the scale, Extrinsic Motivation whereas for Open University students, Extrinsic Motivation did not appear with Reproducing Orientation (Factor I, in this case). As for the other two remaining scales of the ASI, there was no evidence for them in Morgan et al.'s study, but they pointed out that the same was true of the data obtained by Entwistle and colleagues.

The results from the factor analysis showed Open University and conventional university student's approached studying in similar ways, as the two main factors in both cases were the same. The reverse in order of the two factors was attributed to the fact that the comparison was made between Open University foundation students with second-year undergraduates. They concluded that all background qualitative research on student learning, from which the approaches to studying inventory was constructed, was valid for describing student learning in the Open University.

They also compared the scale scores of Open University student with those of Entwistle and colleagues, which were derived from full-time students (2208 of them). They found that Open University students studying Technology and Social Sciences were similar, except on scales for Intrinsic Motivation, Comprehension Learning and Extrinsic Motivation. In contrast, for conventional students of Engineering and Psychology, there were many differences in how they approached study. They suggested that, in the case of conventional students, the marked differences between departments of Engineering and Psychology, presumably, reflected the nature of the subject area and the methods of teaching and assessment of the particular department. The similarities, in the case of Open University students they suggested was due to the fact that the influence of the Open University's 'in-house style' of course was so strong that it over-rode the demands of different subject areas.

A comparison of subscale scores between Open University students and conventional students revealed that Open University students produced higher scores on three of the four aspects of Meaning Orientation (i.e. on Deep Approach, Relating Ideas and Intrinsic Motivation) than conventional students and lower scores on 'Extrinsic Motivation'. Surprisingly, they also produced higher scores on Surface Approach. This was attributed to the Open University's 'in-house-style' course design which emphasised on the 'transmission' of knowledge from the course team to the students (Morgan et al., 1980).



Harper and Kembar (1986) examined approaches to studying in 348 internal students and 431 external students at Capricornia Institute and the Tasmania College of Advanced Education in Australia. The questionnaire used was a slightly adapted version of the ASI. It was revised to conform to the local terminology at each institution and to make the statements meaningful to external students. The subjects consisted of a spread of students from the Schools of Applied Sciences, Business Studies, Social Work and Teacher Education.

Harper and Kember (1986) carried out principal factor analysis with iteration using the oblique rotational method. They were able to identify a four-factor solution for external students, which accounted for 56.4% of the variance. Factor I was very similar to the surface/confusion factor identified by Watkins (1982), with high loadings on Fear of Failure and Surface Approach combined with the learning pathologies of Globetrotting and Improvidence as well as Disorganised Study Methods. Factor II was equivalent to the Meaning Orientation factor identified by previous studies using this inventory (i.e. Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Ramsden and Entwistle, 1981; Watkins, 1982; and Morgan et al., 1980). It was difficult to surmise anything of substance about Factor III past, suggesting that the factor distinguished Operation Learning style as a separate dimension, as it had only two factors loading on it. Factor IV, which had a combination of negative attitudes with Intrinsic Motivation (negative loading), seemed to be concerned with Non-academic Orientation, and appeared similar to the 'Disorganised and Dilatory' factor identified by Ramsden and Entwistle (1981).

Harper and Kember also carried out a factor analysis on the total sample and also found a four-factor solution explaining 55.9% of the variance. Factor I and II were almost identical to the factors identified for the external group. Factor III was Operation Learning style coupled with Globetrotting and Syllabus-boundedness. This is similar to the third factor identified in Watkins (1982) study. Factor IV was similar to the fourth factor identified for external students. From this analysis, it is

clear that the factors for external and internal students are the same, except for Factor III. Based on the analysis of factor structure, Harper and Kembar claimed that ASI is valid for the description of the study processes and learner characteristics, both of students in colleges of advanced education in Australia, and of mature students studying in the external mode. They further claimed that the approaches to study of external students are not qualitatively different from those of students studying 'face-to face'.

Harper and Kember (1986) also conducted a three-way analysis of variance test using the variables mode, subject and sex, with age as a covariate (Nie et al, 1975: 398) for each of the subscales. The results revealed significant differences with the Deep Approach, Relating Ideas and Intrinsic Motivation subscales, which were caused by higher scores by older students. Older students also appeared to be less syllabus-bound. They suggested that the results showed that older students, rather than their younger counterparts, display those learning characteristics, which traditionally higher education has purported to be striving to develop in students. These results are consistent with the findings of Watkins and Hattie (1981: 393) in a survey of students at the University of New England. They found that mature students tended to be less motivated by pragmatic concerns and more liable to adopt a deep-level approach to their work than school-leavers. Watkins (1983: 3) found that mature entrants at the ANU (Australian National University) were more likely to utilise 'deep-level' strategies early in their tertiary studies than school leavers, who, in turn, were more likely to rely on 'rote-learning'.

Harper and Kember (1986) offered several explanations for these findings. The first explanation was the differing motivations of the mature entrant and school leaver. They suggested that there is a greater likelihood of older learners studying more for interest and pleasure, which leads to a more intense approach to subjects which capture their interest. The second explanation was the possibility of the experiences of living and working in the community raising the level of self-reliance and overall



maturity to the extent that it influences study behaviour. The third explanation was that school leavers become so orientated towards a surface approach by the examination system and by teaching at their high schools that their predominant learning style once they enter tertiary study is still 'rote learning'.

Harper and Kember (1986) also carried out an analysis of variance in which age, sex and discipline had been controlled for and they found that there was no significant differences between external and internal students on any of the 16 subscales. In other words, not only were there no qualitative differences between the internal and external students, there were no quantitative differences, either. This clearly suggests that, when designing a course or study materials for the external student, it would be pertinent to take into account the different learning styles and motivational attributes of the mature students. The normal practice in most Australasian universities, including all the public universities in Malaysia, is to produce similar courses for both external and internal students. One reason for this practice is obviously convenience and economy. More importantly it is a matter of status and acceptability of external qualifications. Harper and Kember suggested that it is time to question whether external courses need the prop of legitimacy from their internal counterparts. This question was raised in 1986 and yet in many universities, especially in the Australasian region, this practice is still widespread. Maybe it is time for these universities to offer external courses that allow external students greater flexibility in choosing subjects more suited to their individual learning and career needs.

Richardson et al. (1999) conducted a study to determine the approaches to studying of 2,288 post-foundation students taking courses by distance learning at the Open University. The participants had to answer a 'Student Opinion Survey' which included both closed and open-ended questions concerning their experiences of studying with the Open University, as well as a version of the ASI that had been adapted for use in a distance learning context (Morgan et al., 1980). Participants

were also asked to provide information regarding their disciplines. Information concerning their gender, age, previous education, current courses and academic performance was obtained from official institutional records.

Factor analysis was carried out upon the scores, which they obtained on the 16 subscales to identify the major constructs underlying the responses. A preliminary analysis identified four principal components with eigenvalues greater than one, and these explained 55.9% of the common variance. A common factor analysis was further conducted using principal axis factoring to extract four factors. The extracted factor matrix was subjected to an oblique rotation using a quartamin method. Factor I was labelled as 'Meaning Orientation' due to the fact that Deep Approach, Inter-Relating Ideas, the Use of Evidence and Logic and Comprehension Learning loaded highly on it, as did, Intrinsic Motivation, Achievement Motivation, and Strategic Motivation. Factor II was labelled as 'Reproducing Orientation' because Globetrotting, Surface Approach, Disorganised Study Methods, Fear of Failure, Improvidence and Negative Attitudes to Studying loaded highly on it, as did, Syllabus-boundedness. Factor III was labelled as 'Operation Learning' as Operation Learning loaded highly on it. In addition, significant positive loadings on Improvidence, Syllabus-boundedness, and Surface Approach and negative loadings on Comprehension Learning were exhibited. Factor IV was labelled as 'Extrinsic Motivation' because Extrinsic Motivation loaded positively on it and Intrinsic Motivation loaded negatively on it.

Richardson et al's results also found a modal factor structure that resembled those described by Morgan et al. (1980) and Harper and Kembar (1986), i.e., with two main factors that matched the definition of Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation. The other two factors resembled those of Meyer and Parson (1989) to a certain extent. Factor III consisted of Operation Learning (but not Strategic Approach), whereas Factor IV consisted of Extrinsic Motivation (but also a lack of Intrinsic Motivation, rather than Achievement Motivation).



Richardson et al. also analysed the scores on the subscales of the ASI of the post-foundation students and compared them with the results from the campus-based students who were assessed by Ramsden and Entwistle (1981). They found that the scores produced by the two groups of students were significantly different on all except one of the subscales and that moreover, in seven of these subscales, the difference could be regarded as being of practical importance in terms of the corresponding effect size. The differences that were of significance were that: the distance learning students produced higher scores than the campus-based students on three of the aspects of Meaning Orientation, whilst they produced lower scores than the campus-based students on two of the aspects of Reproducing Orientation and two of the aspects of Achieving Orientation.

### **7.5.3 Comparison of the approaches to studying of campus-based students with those of distance learning students**

Meyer and Parson (1989) compared the results obtained by factor analyses in some of the studies on approaches to studying carried out in United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa on traditional, campus-based students with those of Ramsden and Entwistle and came to the conclusion that there was consistent evidence across the different student populations for two major orientations to studying:

1. a Meaning Orientation which consisted of the subscales concerned with Deep Approach, Inter-relating Ideas, the Use of Evidence and Logic, Intrinsic Motivation and Comprehension Learning ; and
2. a Reproducing Orientation consisting of the subscales concerned with Surface Approach, Syllabus-Boundedness, Fear of Failure, Disorganised Study Methods, Negative Attitudes to Studying, and Improvidence.

Richardson (1994a;1994b) further observed in his survey of literature that Meaning Orientation appears to be relatively consistent and coherent but Reproducing Orientation tends to vary in its detailed manifestation from one system of higher education to another.

With regard to further constructs, Meyer and Parson (1989) found that was no evidence to support the existence of additional constructs concerned with Achieving Orientation or Styles and Pathologies of Learning, as defined by Ramsden and Entwistle. The studies they reviewed include those by Clarke, 1986; Meyer, 1988; Meyer and Dunne, 1991; Meyer and Parson, 1989; Parson, 1988; Watkins, 1982, 1983; Watkins and Hattie, 1985. Harper and Kember (1989), who undertook a similar meta-analytical comparison of factor solutions of the ASI, but included the findings obtained by Morgan et al. (1980) and Harper and Kember (1986), agreed that there was evidence for Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation in both on-campus learners and distance learners. However, they suggested that there was evidence for two additional factors:

3. a 'Narrow Orientation' which consisted of the subscales concerned with Operation Learning and Strategic Approach; and
4. a 'Goal Orientation' which consisted of the subscales concerned with Extrinsic Motivation and Achievement Motivation.

Nevertheless, they acknowledged that these latter constructs had appeared less consistently, suggesting that they might take on varying forms in different student populations or in different learning contexts.

Solutions, which are remarkably similar to the modal factor structure of the ASI described by Harper and Kember (1986), have been found in studies in a number of other countries. Most typically, these studies have produced just two main factors underlying the ASI. There are inconsistency with regard to the other factors, thus suggesting that ASI is not entirely satisfactory as a research instrument. Conversely,



however, the striking consistency amongst the different solutions that have emerged from research carried out in Britain, Australia, Hong Kong, Nepal, Spain, South Africa, Venezuela and the United States suggests that it is in fact fairly 'portable' from one system of higher education to another, including those in the distance learning context. These findings clearly support Morgan et al.'s (1980) claim that approaches to studying in distance education can be characterised using the same concepts and constructs, and that mainstream research literature based on the study of campus-based students will be valid for describing approaches to studying in distance education. The reverse is also possible.

With regard to differences in scores on the subscales of the ASI, Morgan et al, (1980) Harper and Kember (1986) and Richardson et al. (1999) all discovered that there were significant differences between the subscales scores of distance learning students and campus-based students. Harper and Kember and Richardson found clear evidence of higher scores for Meaning Orientation and lower scores for Reproducing Orientation. There was a slight difference in the findings of Morgan et al. They found that Open University students produced significant higher scores for three of the four aspects of Meaning Orientation (i.e., for Deep Approach, Relating Ideas and Intrinsic Motivation) and lower scores on one aspect of Reproducing Orientation (i.e., Intrinsic Motivation). However, surprisingly, they also produced significantly higher scores for Surface Approach. Nevertheless, it is possible to surmise that a general trend of higher scores on the scales concerned with desirable forms of studying and lower scores concerned with less desirable forms of studying is evident in distance learning students when compared to campus-based students, at least, in terms of the avowed aims of institutions of higher education.

### 7.5.4 Background variables affecting approaches to studying

The logical question to ask at this juncture is what are the background variables that could possibly be responsible for the consistent pattern of higher mean scores for Meaning Orientation and lower mean scores for Reproducing Orientation in the case of distance learners when compared to on-campus learners (henceforth described as consistent pattern of mean scores differences). Harper and Kember (1986) found that there was no significant difference between external and internal students on any of the subscales when age, sex and discipline had been controlled for. This suggests that one (or maybe more) of the above-mentioned variables could be responsible for this pattern of mean scores differences. The most possible cause of this is age. Studies by Watkins and Hattie (1981) and Watkins (1983) found that mature campus-based students, rather than their younger counterparts, were more likely to display those learning characteristics desirable of higher education students. Harper and Kember (1986) found that, in both distance learning and campus-based students, age was positively correlated with scores on the subscales concerned with Deep Approach, Inter-relating Ideas, and Intrinsic Motivation and negatively correlated with scores on the subscales concerned with Syllabus-boundedness. Since most distance learning students are much older than campus-based students, it would not be wrong to generalise that distance learning students yield higher scores on the Meaning Orientation than campus-based students. Richardson et al.'s study (1999) lends further support to this claim. They found that older students yielded higher scores on Meaning Orientation. There was no effect of age on the Reproducing Orientation factor or the Operation Learning factor. Thus, it seems that older students, notwithstanding whether they are distance learning students or campus-based students, would exhibit more desirable approaches to studying than their younger counterparts.



There is no clear-cut distinction in the case of gender, unlike in the case of age, where distance learning students are more much older than campus-based students. The mix of male and female students depends to a large extent on the course, the institution and the country concerned. The fact that the pattern of mean scores differences is evident in most contexts and under different learning conditions suggests that there is very little likelihood that gender is responsible for it. Moreover, research into the differences between the subscale scores obtained by men and women has been characterised by their variability rather than their consistency across different investigations. This indicates that the differences are susceptible to the influence of contextual features and other moderator variables (see Severiens and ten Dam, 1994). Richardson et al (1999) found that women taking distance learning courses obtained higher scores than men on the Reproducing Orientation, which would be worrying, if this phenomenon occurred in all distance learning contexts. But there is no evidence to support this, and so it is reasonable to assume that it is a condition that applied only to a specific context.

The next variable to consider is academic discipline. Ramsden and Entwistle (1981) in their research on campus-based students found that different subjects were associated with different approaches to studying: students taking Arts courses were more likely than those taking Science courses to manifest a Deep Approach and other aspects of Meaning Orientation, whereas the reverse was the case for Syllabus-boundedness and other aspects of Reproducing Orientation (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983: 181-184). Harper and Kember (1986), however, obtained similar results in both distance learning and campus-based students for the major subscales. Only subscales concerned with Negative Attitudes to Studying and Extrinsic Motivation showed significant interactions between the effects of mode of study and academic discipline. Morgan et al found significant differences between distance learning students and campus-based learners in the sense that the main scale scores of Open University students studying Technology and Social Sciences were similar whereas those of conventional learners were different in categories. As for Richardson et al, they found no effect of academic subject on the Meaning Orientation factor. In

addition, they further found those students taking a general mix of courses produced relatively high scores on the Reproducing-Orientation factor, whereas students taking Technology courses produced relatively low scores on that factor. Besides, students who were taking Arts or Science courses obtained relatively low scores on the Extrinsic Motivation factor, whereas those taking education courses obtained relatively high scores on that factor. They also found that in the case of Technology courses, men obtained higher scores than women on the Extrinsic-Motivation factor. They concluded that these results confirmed that approaches to studying vary with academic context, and that gender differences in approaches to studying can arise within a particular educational context. The research related to academic disciplines revealed that there are instances of difference in subscales scores between distance learning students and campus-based students of different disciplines but these differences are not as distinctly defined as in the case of age-related differences and, thus, cannot be responsible for the consistent pattern of higher mean scores in distance learning students than campus-based students.

It is worthwhile at this stage to review two more background variables: academic performance and cultural differences. They are not directly related to the research questions of this study but a brief review of them will give be a more comprehensive view of variables affecting approaches to studying. More importantly, it will help in the interpretation of the data of this Study.

Research on the relationship between academic performance and approaches to studying generally focuses on predicting learners academic performance based on their approaches to studying. Biggs (1970) found a complex pattern of interrelationships and concluded that there was no single dimension on which study approaches could be characterised as being good or bad. Nevertheless, it is clear from cognitive psychology that the differences in strategies/approaches that people use when engaging in learning tasks have implications for the quality of their subsequent performance (Weinstein et al., 1979). Indeed, several investigations on



campus-based students have revealed that success in subsequent assessments can be predicted on the basis of scores on the subscales of the ASI. In particular, academic performance is positively related to scores obtained on Deep Approach, Intrinsic Motivation and Strategic Approach, but negatively related to scores on Surface Approach, Disorganised Study Methods and Negative Attitudes (Clarke, 1986; Entwistle, Hanley and Hounsell, 1979; Watkins, 1982, 1983). Kember and Harper (1987) further found that the subscales which predicted academic achievement varied (a) with the outcome being predicted (course completion versus final grades) and (b) with the mode of study (campus-based learning versus distance learning). Richardson et al. (1999) who added another outcome (passing the course) to section (a) were able to find evidence of the same relationships in their study. Comparable findings were also obtained in students at the Dutch Open University (Vermunt and van Rajswijk, 1988).

This Study, however, has no intention of predicting learner academic performance based on their approaches to studying. Instead, it aims at investigating the approaches to studying of learners of three different proficiency levels in English. So far, I have not come across any research that undertakes to do this. The findings that have been discussed in the previous paragraph lead me to suspect that more ESL learners of higher proficiency level in English will adopt a Meaning Orientation to studying. However, it is not possible to predict the differences in approaches of studying between distance learning students and campus-based students of different proficiency levels in English, based on the evidence available from research in this area.

The final variable that I am going to discuss is cultural differences. Marton and his colleagues claimed that the distinction between Deep and Surface Approaches represents a cultural phenomenon, which is socially constructed. It has been confirmed both quantitatively and qualitatively through research carried out both in the West and the East that the modal factor structure (comprising the Meaning

Orientation and Reproducing Orientation) underlying the ASI is fairly 'portable' from one system of higher learning to another, including those in the distance learning context (Richardson et al., 1999: 40). There is also a general consensus that beyond these two factors there are variations in the latter constructs that may take on varying forms in different students population or in different learning contexts (Harper and Kember, 1986). However, in reality, the situation is not as clear-cut as defined. It was found that in the case of students from the Asian cultures, there is prevalent reliance on memorisation. If we were to associate memorisation with rote learning, then this situation would represent a disturbing picture. But research has shown that this memorisation is frequently accompanied with attempts to reach understanding. Kember and Gow (1990) found a 'narrow approach' in which students from Hong Kong worked systematically through material section-by-section attempting to understand each new concept and then committing it to memory before proceeding to the next. Others have subsequently reported observations of memorisation occurring in conjunction with understanding (see for e.g. Kember and Gow, 1990; Biggs, 1996; Marton, Dall' Alba and Kun, 1996; Watkins, 1996; Hess and Azuma, 1991).

Kember (1996) suggested that the various forms of combining memorisation and understanding meant that approaches to studying may be better characterised as a continuum rather than dichotomous Deep and Surface Approaches. He described the intermediate position closer to the deep end of the spectrum as arising from students who have a preference for seeking understanding but recognise that their examinations normally require them to produce material. They, therefore try to understand the concepts and then make sure the material is learnt so that they can get a good grade in the examination. As for the intermediate position towards the surface end of the spectrum, he described it as arising because students, who initially has the intention to memorise, but discover that they have to be selective, as the memory load increases as they progress through school. Watkins (1996) reporting interviews with Hong Kong secondary school students interpreted the continuum in terms of four stages beginning with reproduction by rote learning, and ultimately



moving to understanding materials before committing it to memory. In the light of this research, memorising in the Asian context should not necessarily be viewed negatively, as there is great likelihood that it can lead to understanding of underlying of concepts, and ultimately to the achievement of higher grades in examinations.

Kember (2000) also offered his view with regard to genuine cases of rote learning. He suggested that this could arise from the use of didactic spoon feeding which does not encourage students to adopt a Deep Approach or think critically. Thus, the way the curriculum is designed and the way the course is taught can affect the learning approach which students adopt. This means that the attitudes and beliefs of the instructors are relevant as these have marked impact upon the nature of the courses they teach (Gow and Kember, 1993; Kember and Gow, 1994; Kember 1997). This can be described as "teachers' expectations leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy". In other words, teachers' beliefs that students have a predilection for rote learning lead them to structure their courses to cater for this type of learning, which leads to students adopting a Surface Approach (Kember, 2000:107). However, it has to be pointed out that this explanation for the occurrence of rote learning is not limited to an Asian context. It has universal applicability. However, the likelihood of it being the cause of rote learning in an Asian context is higher because of the general misconception that Asian learners rely on rote learning (Kember, 2000).

Another belief commonly associated with Asian students is that they prefer to be passive learners and resist the introduction of forms of teaching which require them to play an active role in their learning. Research by Kember and Gow (1992) and Kember and McKay (1996), however did not find evidence of this. Instead they found clear support from students with regard to programmes to improve the quality of courses by introducing innovative forms of teaching and learning. Understandably, some students found the new course format initially difficult but, given time to adapt, they were soon able to overcome their initial difficulties and began to value the new form of learning and teaching. A project by Kember et al. (in

press, ch.10 cited by Kember, 2000) which investigated the affective dimension of the introduction of students to a new form of teaching supports this finding.

Another belief about Asian students is that they are motivated by a desire to succeed at university by the prospect of a well-paid career or graduation. This type of motivation has been classified as extrinsic and viewed in a negative light. Kember et al. (1999) discovered in a series of interviews with Hong Kong students that many statements about career preparation and career relevance given by the students were hard to classify as Intrinsic Motivation in the conventional sense. The comments showed that the students were aware of the positive qualities of the courses and expected the courses to provide both intrinsic and career motivation. Kember (2000) argued the case that it could be common for Hong Kong students to have internalised a value for high-status well-paid careers. This view was earlier propounded by Stevenson and Lee in their book **The Handbook of Chinese Psychology** (1996) who further proposed that a course which boosted career prospects would enhance instead of decrease Intrinsic Motivation. They also suggested the applicability of this principle to other parts of Asia.

Finally, there is also a belief that Asian students have high levels of Achieving Motivation since they perform so well in studies. The salient points of Achieving Motivation is an emphasis on the individual, and his or her ego, and the competitive nature of the motivation. However, Tang (1993) found evidence of a range of collaboration on assessment tasks. Furthermore, the collaborating students tended to exhibit both better performance and Deeper Approaches than those studying individually. This seems to suggest that Western concept of Achieving Motivation is not appropriate to the Asian context (Salili, 1996). But this interpretation may not be entirely correct for the present time. Hofstede (1991) pointed out in his research that in 'collective' societies, the greater the economic wealth, the greater the move towards individualism and Extrinsic Motivation. Applying this principle, it will



mean that the so-called 'Western' views of motivation may be becoming more and more applicable to students from the booming 'Tiger' economies.

### 7.5.5 Summary

The studies undertaken on approaches to studying revealed that there was consistent evidence across student populations for two major orientations to studying. They are:

1. a Meaning Orientation which consisted of the subscales concerned with Deep Approach, Inter-relating Ideas, the Use of Evidence and Logic, Intrinsic Motivation and Comprehension Learning; and
2. a Reproducing Orientation consisting of the subscales concerned with Surface Approach, Syllabus-boundedness, Fear of Failure, Disorganised Study Methods, Negative Attitudes to Studying, and Improvidence.

It was further observed that Meaning Orientation appears to be relatively consistent and coherent but Reproducing Orientation tends to vary in its detailed manifestation from one system of higher education to another. As for other constructs, they appear less consistently and seem to take on varying forms in different student populations or in different learning contexts. Besides, findings further revealed a general trend of higher scores on the scales concerned with desirable forms of studying and lower scores concerned with less desirable forms of studying in both distance learning and campus-based students, at least, in terms of the avowed aims of institutions of higher education.

Some studies also revealed that more mature students (both on-campus and distance learning) are more likely to display characteristics desirable of higher education students. This suggests a positive association between age and desirable behaviour to

studying. However, unlike age, there is no clear-cut distinction in gender. As for academic disciplines, research revealed that there are instances of difference in subscales scores between distance learning students and campus-based students of different disciplines, but these differences are not as distinctly defined as in the case of age-related differences and thus, cannot be responsible for the consistent pattern of higher mean scores in distance learning students than campus-based students.

Some studies also revealed that academic performance is positively related to scores obtained on Deep Approach, Intrinsic Motivation and Strategic Approach, but negatively related to scores on Surface Approach, Disorganised Study Methods and Negative Attitudes. Since this study aims at investigating the approaches to studying of Malaysian ESL learners of three different proficiency, these findings are not directly relevant to it, but it does suggest a greater likelihood of higher proficiency learners adopting a Meaning Orientation to studying.

Studies also revealed that there seems to be a prevalent reliance on memorisation in the case of Chinese students in Hong Kong. This would be a disturbing picture if this memorisation is associated with rote learning, but research has shown that this is not necessarily the case. Instead, research has shown that in many cases, memorisation is accompanied by attempts to reach understanding. Although these studies were carried out mainly on Chinese in Hong Kong, I believe they are applicable to Asians from other contexts too, such as my sample population which comprises Malaysians of different ethnic Asian origins. On the other hand, research to investigate other beliefs regarding these students, such as the beliefs that they are passive learners, they are mainly extrinsically motivated and they have different concepts of motivation, have come up with contradictory results. In view of their contradictory nature, these results will not be compared with the present study.



In the next chapter I will undertake to investigate Malaysian ESL distance learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying and compare them with those of Malaysian ESL on-campus learners. The results of the study will be analysed and interpreted in the light of the findings of the studies discussed here. Since we are asking students' to identify their own approaches to studying through a questionnaire, it is appropriate that the term 'conceptions' be included, like in Study One. The specific research questions, and the analysis and discussion of the results derived from the data will be presented in the next chapter.



**THE BRITISH LIBRARY**  
**BRITISH THESIS SERVICE**

**COPYRIGHT**

Reproduction of this thesis, other than as permitted under the United Kingdom Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under specific agreement with the copyright holder, is prohibited.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

**REPRODUCTION QUALITY NOTICE**

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the original thesis. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction, some pages which contain small or poor printing may not reproduce well.

Previously copyrighted material (journal articles, published texts etc.) is not reproduced.

**THIS THESIS HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**



**DX**

**221466**

**vol.1**

**DX**

**221466**

**vol.2**



**THE BRITISH LIBRARY  
BRITISH THESIS SERVICE**

**COPYRIGHT**

Reproduction of this thesis, other than as permitted under the United Kingdom Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under specific agreement with the copyright holder, is prohibited.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

**REPRODUCTION QUALITY NOTICE**

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the original thesis. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction, some pages which contain small or poor printing may not reproduce well.

Previously copyrighted material (journal articles, published texts etc.) is not reproduced.

**THIS THESIS HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

**UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**



**Malaysian Learners' Conceptions of their Learning  
Processes and their Perceptions of their English as a  
Second Language (ESL) Courses in a Tertiary Distance  
Learning Context**

*by*

***Siew Ming Thang (M.A.)***

**Volume Two: Chapters 8 to 11  
and Bibliography &  
Appendices**

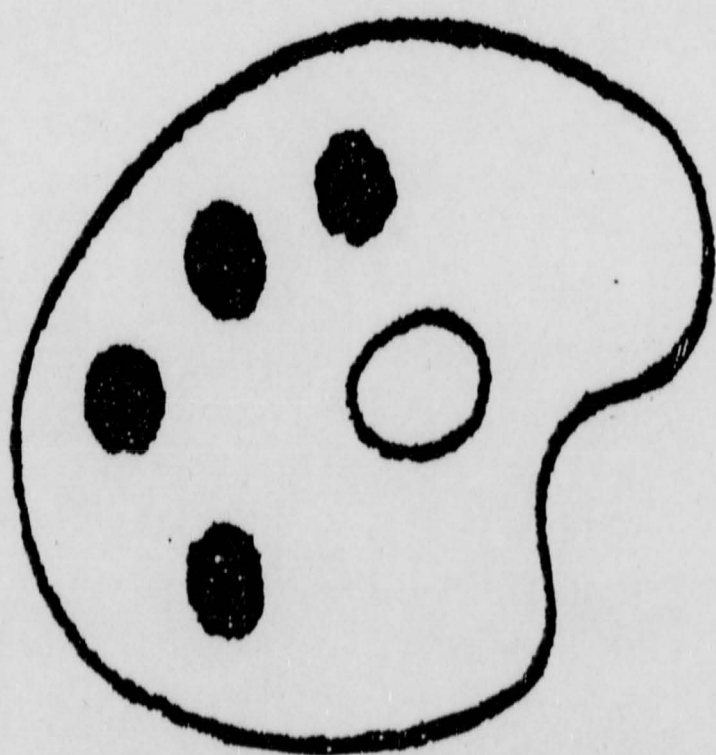


**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**October 2001**



# Numerous Originals in Colour



# CHAPTER 8

## Study Two

### Conceptions of approaches to studying in general: Focusing on the data

#### 8.1 Introduction

The relevant literature pertaining to approaches to studying has been discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter I am going to undertake a comparison of the conceptions of approaches to studying in general (i.e., in studying all subjects) of Malaysian ESL distance learners and on-campus learners from UKM. The chapter will begin by discussing the research design and proceed to analyse the data quantitatively with the use of the SPSS (9.0) package. This will be accompanied by relevant discussion of the results. In the final section, findings from previous studies (discussed in Chapter 7) will be drawn upon to help in the explanation of the overall results. Finally, the implications of the findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context will be discussed.



## 8.2 Research Design

### 8.2.1 Research questions

In an attempt to acquire a better understanding of the differences in conceptions of approaches to studying of distance ESL learners and on-campus ESL learners, Study Two of this thesis seeks answers to the following research questions:

- (1) Are the Malaysian ESL distance learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying different from those of the Malaysian ESL on-campus learners and if yes, in what ways?
- (2) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **distance learners'** conceptions of their approaches to studying different from each others and if yes, in what ways?
  - (i) Low Proficiency Learners (Lo), Average Proficiency learners (Av), High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (Soc.Sc.), Applied Science (Appl. Sc.) and Business Administration (Bus. Adm.) students.
- (3) Are the following categories of Malaysian ESL **on-campus learners'** conceptions of their approaches to studying different from each others and if yes, in what ways?
  - (i) Low Proficiency Learners (Lo), Average Proficiency learners (Av), High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (Soc.Sc.), Applied Science (Appl. Sc.) and Business Administration (Bus. Adm.) students.

- (4) Are there any differences between (2) and (3)? If so, what are they?
- (5) What are the implications of the above findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context.

## 8.2.2 Research instrument

Only one type of instrument, i.e., a questionnaire was used in this study. This sub-questionnaire entitled **The New Approaches to Studying Inventory (NASI)**, comprised items taken mainly from the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (RASI) (Entwistle and Tait, 1994) supplemented with some subscales and items from the original Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI) by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983).

### 8.2.2.1 The New Approaches to Studying Inventory

RASI comprises 38 self-report items designed to measure student approaches to studying in a higher education context (see Appendix 8A for the composition of the scales/subscales). Five response categories -- agree, agree somewhat, unsure, disagree somewhat, and disagree -- are provided for each item. Fig.8.1 gives a breakdown of the items under each scale of the RASI.



Scale	Subscale	No. of items	Items under subscale
1. Deep Approach	Looking for meaning	2	30, 19
	Active interest/critical stance	2	5, 1
	Relating and organising ideas	3	13, 25, 28
	Using evidence and logic	3	38, 32, 35
2. Surface Approach	Relying on memorising	2	26, 20
	Difficulty in making sense	2	22, 6
	Unrelatedness	2	9, 23
	Concern about coping	4	17, 3, 33, 7
3. Strategic Approach	Determination to excel	2	27, 21
	Effort in studying	2	14, 24
	Organised studying	3	10, 2, 31
	Time management	3	18, 34, 37
4. Lack of Direction		4	29, 36, 11, 15
5. Academic Self-confidence		4	4, 8, 16, 12

Fig. 8.1 Breakdown of the items under each scale of the RASI

For my pilot study, I did not use RASI. Instead, I used the ASI. I was able to obtain some promising results from the pilot study (see Chapter 4, Pilot Study 2) suggesting that this inventory has good possibilities, but I found it unsuitable for my purpose for the following reasons: First, the ASI is too lengthy. Since the USLPCQ has three sub-questionnaires, it would be unwise to include all 64 items of the ASI. Beside that, many of the items are verbose, and some, repetitive. I found difficulty translating the wordy ones, and in spite of efforts to simplify them, many of my

subjects at the pilot study still complained about difficulty in comprehending some of them. I decided to use the RASI instead as it is much simpler and less wordy, and yet comprehensive in being able to include the dominant orientations (main groups) and subgroups. The two main orientations, i.e., Deep Approach and Surface Approach, which were clear-cut and identifiable in all of Entwistle and colleagues' analyses, are dealt with in sufficient depth and are better defined in this inventory. Comprehension Learning and Operation Learning are left out totally. This is suitable for the purpose of this study. These two orientations relate more to styles than approaches, and since styles had been dealt with amply in Chapters 5 and 6, it is unnecessary to consider them further at this stage.

In spite of its strengths, I found certain weaknesses in RASI too. In my opinion certain items should be included. Even though one of my intentions in using the RASI was to reduce the number of items in the USLPCQ, I realised I could not sacrifice quality in the process. In addition, my Pilot Study 2 had already shown that there was a lack of reliability in the classifications of questions for each subscale of the ASI. If the number of questions were further reduced, the reliability would be further affected. I realised I had to compromise, which meant discarding my initial aim of achieving reliability for each subscale, and instead focused on obtaining reliability for each scale. This I felt could be enhanced by including relevant items from the ASI which were left out in the RASI.

In my opinion, another weakness of the RASI was that two relevant subscales were excluded: Syllabus-boundedness and Extrinsic Motivation. I felt that Syllabus-boundedness should be included, but not be classified under Surface Approach as was the case in the ASI (see Appendix 7D for the subscales of this inventory). A review of the items in this group (as listed below) will help to explain why I arrived at this decision.



1. I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments.
2. I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised.
3. I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments.

(Taken from the Entwistle and Ramsden's ASI, 1983)

Although item 3 does suggest a Surface Approach to studying, items 1 and 2 do not necessarily do so. It is not difficult to imagine students taking courses that do not have much structure and direction responding positively to these items, as an expression of their needs for more guidance from their teachers or more organisation and direction in the programmes they are involved. This would most probably include distance learners who are capable of using the Deep Approaches to studying. Thus, I felt that Syllabus-boundedness should be included in the NASI as a separate group. I further added the following item to this scale so that each scale/subscale has at least four items:

4. I constantly check the course schedule to make sure I am reading what is required of me.

(Taken from ASI)

On comparing the RASI with the ASI, it became evident that many of the items in the subscales of the ASI that describe negative approaches to studying were not included in the RASL. However, instead were reworded positively, simplified, reduced in numbers and redistributed to other relevant groups. The items under Intrinsic Motivation were also simplified and redistributed to relevant groups. But, Extrinsic Motivation was excluded totally from RASI. In my opinion this was an unwise move. Thus, I decided to include it in, but I felt it should not be placed as a subscale of Reproducing Orientation (as in the case of ASI), but included as a separate group. This is because Extrinsic Motivation is ambivalent in nature. It has

both positive and negative connotations and does not fit properly in any of the groups (Kember, 2000). The final inventory I arrived at which I labelled as New Approaches to Studying Inventory (NASI) has 7 groups. See Fig.8.2 for the breakdown of the items under each scale of the NASI and Fig.8.3 for an explanation of the meaning of each scale/subscale. (See also Appendix 8B for a comparison of the composition of the RASI and the NASI and an explanation of the changes undertaken).

Scale	Subscale	No. of Items	Items in subscale
1. Deep Approach	Looking for meaning	3	46, 6, 17
	Active interest/critical stance	3	25, 19, 2
	Relating and organising ideas	3	38, 44, 3
	Use evidence and logic	3	12, 28, 53
2. Surface Approach	Relying on memorising	3	47, 20, 4
	Difficulty in making sense	3	16, 35, 52
	Unrelatedness	3	32, 7, 23
	Concern about coping	3	13, 29, 37, 49
3. Strategic Approach	Determination to excel	3	45, 14, 30
	Effort in studying	3	11, 34, 51
	Organised studying	3	50, 9, 22
	Time management	3	43, 21, 18
4. Lack of Direction		4	1, 36, 10, 48
5. Academic Self-confidence		4	33, 15, 41, 24
6. Syllabus-boundedness		4	8, 27, 42, 39
7. Extrinsic Motivation		4	26, 5, 31, 40

Fig. 8.2 Breakdown of the items under each scale of the NASI.



Scale/subscale	Meaning
<b>1. Deep Approach</b> Looking for meaning Active interest/critical stance Relating and organising ideas Use evidence and logic	Learners look for meaning in studying. Learners have an active interest in subjects studied. They interact actively with what is being learnt and link what is being studied with real life. Learners relate new information to previous information actively and organise ideas mentally. Learners use evidence and logic in trying to understand materials and to arrive at conclusions.
<b>2. Surface Approach</b> Relying on memorising Difficulty in making sense Unrelatedness Concern about coping	Learners rely on rote learning. Learners find difficulty in understanding and making sense of what is being read and things that have to be remembered. Learners find difficulty in perceiving what is important and also in seeing an overall picture or how ideas fit together. Learners are unduly concerned over ability to cope with work.
<b>3. Strategic Approach</b> Determination to excel Effort in studying Organised studying Time Management	Learners are competitive and self-confident and determined to achieve success. Learners put in extra effort to make sure that work is being done well. They work hard and are able to concentrate well on work. Learners have organised study methods. They make an effort to ensure that appropriate conditions and materials for study are available. Learners are able to organise time effectively and able to abide by good study plans.
<b>4. Lack of direction</b>	Learners are cynical and disenchanted about higher education. Feel driven to enter university to please others.
<b>5. Academic-self confidence</b>	Learners feel confident about ability to cope with work. They have no difficulty in understanding new information and ideas.
<b>6. Extrinsic Motivation</b>	Learners are primarily motivated by the qualifications and the prospects of a good job on graduation.
<b>7. Syllabus-boundedness</b>	Learners have the intention to restrict learning to the defined syllabus and tasks requirements.

Fig. 8.3 Meaning of the scale/subscales of the NASI (adapted from Ramsden, 1983)

Besides, the above-mentioned modifications, the number of responses to each question was reduced to four i.e., 4 for 'strongly agree', 3 'agree', 2 'disagree' and 1 'strongly disagree'. I left out the neutral response category because my Pilot Study 2 had revealed that it led to a great deal of ambiguity. As Waugh and Addison (1998) pointed out the neutral response category allows a variety of answers such as, 'don't know', 'not sure', 'neutral' or 'don't want to answer', and thus is not a good measurement procedure because interpretation is unclear (see also Dubois and Burns, 1975 and Sheridan, 1993). Similar to the RASI, the items in the NASI were randomly ordered and students were asked to respond to studying in general. It was not advisable to ask the students to respond specifically to their learning/studying of English because many of questions relate to studying in general. Besides, since the purpose of this study is to investigate learners' conceptions of their **approaches to studying** which are relatively stable and apply to the studying of all subjects, it is inappropriate to ask the students to focus only on their learning/studying of English.

### 8.2.3 Sample population

As the NASI was part of the USLPCQ, it was distributed to the same sample population as in Study One.

### 8.2.4 Research procedures

The same procedures as in Study One were involved. Out of the 750 USPLCQs that were received, it was discovered that the NASI section of 24 of the questionnaires was incomplete. These were discarded. The remaining 726 NASIs, which included those with missing components (i.e., missing information on year/proficiency level/discipline) were retained. See Fig.8.4 for a breakdown of the number of the



respondents according to the various categories and Fig.8.5 for a breakdown of respondents according to age groups.

Mode	Year	Proficiency level	Discipline				Total
			Soc. Sc.	Appl. Sc.	Bus. Adm.	Missing	
Distance Learners	1	1	1	2	15	0	18
		2	2	1	8	0	11
		3	3	0	3	1	7
		Missing	4	0	2	0	6
		Total	10	3	28	1	42
	2	1	92	19	43	1	155
		2	31	18	30	0	79
		3	13	7	13	0	33
		Missing	10	11	15	1	37
		Total	146	55	101	2	304
	Missing	1	0	1	1	1	3
		2	0	0	0	1	1
		Missing	0	1	1	3	5
		Total	0	2	2	5	9
On-campus Learners	2	1	31	42	46	0	119
		2	21	61	50	1	133
		3	18	35	58	0	111
		Missing	0	4	3	1	8
		Total	70	142	157	2	371
Grand Total							726

Fig. 8.4 A breakdown of respondents according to categories

Age group	Mode		Total
	distance learners	On-campus learners	
23 and below	6	353	359
24 to 30	197	2	199
31 to 40	112	12	124
41 and above	20	0	20
Total	335	367	702
With Missing data	20	4	24
Total respondents	355	371	726

Fig. 8.5 A breakdown of the respondents according to age groups

As can be seen from Fig.8.5, out of a total of 726 respondents used for the analysis of the data, 355 were distance learners and 371 were on-campus learners. 92.2 % of the distance learners were between 24 to 40 years of age. In other words, most of them were adult learners. As for the on-campus learners, 96.2% were 23 and below. In other words, most of them were recent school leavers.

Comparison of mean scores of each item, calculation of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients of the NASI scales, comparison of mean scores of NASI scales and factor analysis of subscales/scales (i.e., the subscales of Deep Approach, Surface Approach, Strategic Approach and the scales of Lack of Direction, Academic Self-Confidence, Extrinsic Motivation and Syllabus-boundedness) were completed using SPSS (Version 9) statistical package. ANOVA was employed in the comparison of all mean scores.



## 8.3 Analysis of Results

Before proceeding with the analysis of mean scores, it is essential to provide the guide for interpretation of mean scores. The mean scores should be interpreted in the following manner:

Mean Score	Meaning
4	Strongly agree
3	Agree
2	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree

### 8.3.1 Item analysis

Ramsden (1983) pointed out that “the answers to groups of questions are much more reliable than the answers to individual questions” (p. 5) in his discussion of the Lancaster Approaches to Studying and Course Perceptions Questionnaire. In view of that he did not carry out an item analysis in his research study. This is an echo of the view held in Study One. In spite of that, I decided to attempt an item analysis of mean scores of learners from the two different modes as I believed that some general trends could be derived from these comparisons. Besides, it would enable me to have a better understanding of how learners from the two different modes respond to each item individually. ANOVA was employed for this purpose. To ensure greater reliability only significant differences in mean scores (i.e.,  $p < 0.05$ ) were taken into consideration.

### 8.3.1.1 Comparison of mean scores across modes

#### Presentation of results

The mean scores per item of the distance learners and on-campus learners were compared. The results were significant for the items displayed in Fig.8.6

SD = Standard Deviation

DLs = distance learners

OCLs = On-campus learners

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Underlined mean score = higher mean score

Fig. 8.6 Comparison of mean scores per question of the distance learners and on-campus learners

Scale	Subscale/items	Mean score		SD		F (df)
		DLs	OCLs	DLs	OCLs	
(I) Deep Approach (DA)	<b>Looking for meaning</b> <b>No. 17</b> I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult.	<u>3.30</u>	3.22	0.56	0.59	4.14*(1/723)
	<b>No. 46</b> I usually set out to understand for myself the meaning of what we have to learn.	<u>3.35</u>	3.26	0.54	0.54	4.36*(1/723)



<b>Active interest/Critical stance</b> <b>No. 2</b> My main reason for being in university is to learn more about subjects that really interest me. <b>No. 20</b> I 'm not prepared to accept things I'm told; I have to think them out myself. <b>No. 25</b> Sometimes I find myself thinking about ideas from the course when I am doing other things.	<u>3.22</u>	2.96	0.79	0.84	18.20**(1/723)
	<u>3.12</u>	2.90	0.60	0.64	23.13**(1/723)
	<u>3.12</u>	3.01	0.62	0.60	5.86*(1/722)
<b>Relating and organising ideas</b> <b>No. 3</b> Ideas in course books or articles often set me off on long chains of thought about what I'm reading. <b>No. 38</b> I try to relate ideas I come across to other topics or other courses whenever possible. <b>No. 44</b> When I m working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together.	<u>3.26</u>	3.02	0.59	0.63	28.59**(1/724)
	<u>3.07</u>	2.95	0.59	0.61	6.79*(1/724)
	<u>3.12</u>	2.93	0.54	0.57	20.53**(1/720)
	<b>Use evidence and logic</b>				
	<u>3.34</u>	3.21	0.58	0.56	9.56*(1/723)
	<u>3.34</u>	3.13	0.55	0.58	23.60**(1/724)
<b>No. 53</b> It's important for me to be able to follow the argument or see the reasoning behind something.	<u>3.27</u>	3.17	0.58	0.55	5.48*(1/722)

(II) Surface Approach (SA)	<b>Relying on memorising</b> <b>No. 4</b> The best way for me to understand the meanings of technical terms is to remember the textbook definitions.	<u>2.86</u>	2.66	0.70	0.73	13.46**(1/721)
	<b>No. 19</b> I spend quite a lot of time repeating or copying out things to help me remember them.	<u>3.03</u>	2.88	0.70	0.77	7.50*(1/724)
	<b>Unrelatedness</b> <b>No. 8</b> I'm not sure what's important, so I try to get down as much as I can in lectures.	2.48	<u>2.76</u>	0.87	<u>0.84</u>	19.04**(1/723)
	<b>Concern about coping</b> <b>No. 13</b> Sometimes I worry about whether I'll be able to cope with the work properly.	3.12	<u>3.29</u>	0.76	0.64	10.66*(1/724)
	<b>No. 49</b> Often I lie awake worrying about work I think I won't be able to do.	3.02	<u>3.15</u>	0.78	0.74	5.19*(1/723)
(III) Strategic Approach (StrA)	<b>Determination to excel</b> <b>No. 14</b> I know what I want to get out of this course and I'm determined to achieve it..	<u>3.48</u>	3.32	0.60	0.68	11.28*(1/723)
	<b>No. 30</b> I enjoy competition; I find it stimulating.	<u>3.17</u>	3.07	0.65	0.67	4.51*(1/724)
	<b>Effort in studying</b> <b>No. 34</b> I work hard when I'm studying and generally manage to keep my mind on what I'm doing.	<u>3.02</u>	2.85	0.59	0.64	14.41**(1/722)
	<b>Organised studying</b> <b>No. 22</b> I think I'm quite systematic and organised in the way I go about studying.	<u>2.89</u>	2.59	0.72	0.71	31.94**(1/724)



	<b>Time Management</b> <b>No. 18</b> I work steadily throughout the course, rather than leaving everything until the last minute. <b>No. 43</b> I organise my study time carefully to make the best use of it.	<u>3.08</u>	2.77	0.69	0.76	32.58**(1/722)
(IV)	<b>No. 10</b> When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to enter the university. <b>No. 36</b> I think I'm in university more to please other people than because I really wanted it myself.	2.07	<u>2.32</u>	0.89	0.95	14.01**(1/724)
Lack of Direction (LOD)		1.61	<u>1.80</u>	0.76	0.83	10.64*(1/723)
(V)	<b>No. 33</b> So far, I seem to have a good grasp of the subjects I'm studying. <b>No. 41</b> I don't usually have much difficulty in making sense of new information or ideas.	<u>2.93</u>	2.74	0.59	0.61	17.82**(1/723)
Academic Self-Confidence (ASC)		<u>2.57</u>	2.41	0.74	0.66	9.90*(1/723)
(VI)	<b>No. 40</b> I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking.	2.48	<u>2.66</u>	0.83	0.75	8.84*(1/723)
Extrinsic Motivation (EM)						
(VII)	<b>No. 27</b> I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised. <b>No. 39</b> I constantly check the course schedule to make sure I am reading what is required of me. <b>No. 42</b> I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments.	<u>3.66</u>	3.48	0.49	0.58	20.28**(1/724)
Syllabus-Boundedness (SB)		<u>3.15</u>	2.72	0.62	0.73	71.55**(1/722)
		2.43	<u>2.58</u>	0.74	0.76	7.41*(1/722)

It is possible to observe some general trends from Fig.8.6. A comparison of mean scores of the distance learners and the on-campus learners revealed that differences in mean scores of 30 items were significant: eleven items were from Deep Approach, five from the Surface Approach, six from the Strategic Approach, two from Lack of Direction, two from Academic Self-confidence, one from Extrinsic Motivation and three from Syllabus-boundedness.

The mean scores of the distance learners for all the items in the Deep Approach were significantly higher than the on-campus learners. This strongly suggested that the distance learners utilised more Deep Approach strategies in comparison to the on-campus learners. In the case of the Surface Approach, the mean scores of the on-campus learners were significantly higher than the distance learners for items 8, 13 and 49. The reverse was true for items 4 and 19. However, since only five items out of a total of thirteen items displayed significant differences in mean scores, it is unwise to claim that this suggested that more on-campus learners preferred the Surface Approach. It is more prudent to consider each item separately. An examination of the five items in the Surface Approach seemed to suggest that more on-campus learners appeared unsure of what was important and seemed not to be coping well. On the other hand, more distance learners seemed to be relying on memorising. The rest of the items are also going to be considered separately, too, as they do not represent a majority of the items in the various categories.

In the case of the Strategic Approach, the mean scores of the distance learners were significantly higher than the on-campus learners for all 6 (out of 12) items i.e., for items 14, 30, 34, 22, 18, and 43. An examination of these items suggested that the distance learners were more motivated, better organised and able to manage time better.



As for Lack of Direction, the mean scores for items 10 and 36, were rather low (below 2.5) suggesting negative rather than positive responses to these items. However, the mean scores of the on-campus learners were significantly higher than the distance learners for these items, which suggested that more on-campus learners were unsure about their intentions for entering university than the distance learners.

With regard to Academic Self-confidence, the mean scores of the distance learners were significantly higher than the on-campus learners for items 33 and 41, which suggested that more distance learners had a good grasp of the subjects they were studying and had less difficulty making sense of new information.

The mean score of the on-campus learners was significantly higher than the distance learners for only one item from Extrinsic Motivation i.e., item 40. This suggested that more on-campus learners were more interested in the qualifications they would be getting than studying for the sake of knowledge.

Finally, for Syllabus-boundedness, the mean scores of the distance learners were significantly higher than the on-campus learners for two items i.e., items 27 and 39, which suggested that more distance learners preferred structured and highly organised courses, and were constantly checking to make sure that they were reading within the syllabus. On the other hand, the mean score of on-campus learners was higher than the distance learners for item 42, which suggested that on-campus learners tended to read very little beyond what was required for completing assignments.

### **Discussion of results**

The results echoed some of the findings of Pilot Study 2. They suggested that generally more distance learners utilised Deep Approach studying techniques in comparison to on-campus learners. There were also indications that more of them were highly motivated, systematic, well-organised and able to manage time well. More of them also appeared to have a better grasp of the subjects they were studying. Their prime weaknesses seemed to be an over-reliance on memorisation and syllabus. Their seemingly strong preference for highly organised and structured courses and their diligent checking of their course schedules suggested over-anxiety and fear that they were not studying what were required of them. However, they appeared less likely "to read little beyond what was required for completing assignments" than on-campus learners. These characteristics are not unexpected of distance learners and may be a result of insufficient guidelines and lack of facilities, such as library books.

On the other hand, more on-campus learners seemed not to be sure what was important and appeared not to be coping well. More of them also appeared uncertain about their intentions for entering university and seemed to be motivated more by a desire to obtain an academic qualification than a desire to pursue knowledge. Their only strong point was that they were less bound by the syllabus. However, this may be just a result of the fact that they are full-time on campus learners and not necessary an intrinsic strength in them.



### 8.3.2 Scale Analysis

#### 8.3.2.1 Analysis of reliability of classification of items based on the NASI scales

Before attempting an analysis of the classification of questions based on the NASI scales, the reliability of the classification of the items according to the scales had to be determined. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients for the three major scales were above 0.7 suggesting reliability of classification (Deep Approach=0.78, Surface Approach =0.71 and Strategic Approach =0.79). Reliability coefficients for the four other scales were below 0.7 suggesting a lack of reliability in their classification (Lack of Direction =0.67, Academic Self-Confidence =0.62, Extrinsic Motivation =0.60, and Syllabus Boundedness =0.14). Since this is an exploratory study and considering that these four scales have only four variables which made it more difficult to obtain reliable results, I decided to include for further analysis the results of the three scales with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of more than 0.6. The scale of Syllabus Boundedness was excluded as its Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was too far below the acceptable level.

8.3.2.2 Analysis of approaches to studying preferred by learners of different modes

Presentation of results

Fig.8.7 gives the mean scores of the distance learners and on-campus learners for the six categories with  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient of more than 0.6.

Category	distance learners		On-campus learners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Deep Approach	3.25	0.34	3.11	0.31
Strategic Approach	3.10	0.36	2.99	0.36
Surface Approach	2.84	0.34	2.88	0.31
Extrinsic Motivation	2.80	0.58	2.86	0.51
Academic-self confidence	2.68	0.47	2.60	0.45
Lack of Direction	1.75	0.60	1.89	0.59

SD = Standard deviation

Fig .8.7 Mean scores of the distance learners and on-campus learners for the six categories

The figure shows that mean scores for the Deep Approach to Studying were much higher for both groups of learners in comparison to the Surface Approach to Studying. The mean scores for Strategic Approach were also higher than Surface Approach for both groups of learners. The mean scores for the three other



categories followed the same order for both groups of learners, with Extrinsic Motivation having the highest mean scores, followed by Academic Self-Confidence and Lack of Direction. The mean scores for Lack of Direction were below 2 for both groups of learners suggesting that a majority of these learners 'disagreed' with the items in this category.

A comparison of mean scores of learners of the two different modes using ANOVA revealed significant results for the Deep Approach, Strategic Approach, Lack of Direction, Academic Self-Confidence and Extrinsic Motivation. The results showed that the mean scores of the distance learners were significantly higher for the Deep Approach, Strategic Approach and Academic Self-Confidence [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 37.52(1/724)$ ,  $16.42(1/724)$ , and  $7.03(1/724)$ ] respectively, and significantly lower for Lack of Direction and Extrinsic Motivation than on-campus learners [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 9.40(1/724)$ , and  $4.41(1/724)$ ] respectively.

### **Discussion of results**

The results which give a rudimentary profile of both groups of learners echoed many of the findings of Pilot Study 2. Similarly, higher mean scores were evident for Deep Approach and Strategic Approach and lower mean scores for the Surface Approach for both groups of learners. These findings clearly suggested that both groups of learners indicated greater preferences for techniques of studying associated with Deep Approach and Strategic Approach to studying than those associated with Surface Approach to studying. Both groups also showed somewhat parallel preferences for Extrinsic Motivation, Academic Self-Confidence and Lack of Direction. The very much lower scores for Lack of Direction strongly suggested that Lack of Direction was not a problem with both groups of learners suggesting that most of them were personally motivated towards pursuing a university education. It is appropriate at this juncture to surmise that the findings suggested that both groups

were not very different with regard to the pattern of approaches to studying preferred.

However, a comparison across modes revealed that more distance learners responded positively to questions from the Deep Approach, Strategic Approach and Academic Self-Confidence categories than on-campus learners. This suggested that more distance learners were inclined to use effective studying strategies which involved deep level processing of information, and 'strategically-oriented' techniques than on-campus learners. They also indicated greater confidence academically. On the other hand, more on-campus learners scored positively for Extrinsic Motivation and Lack of Direction. This suggested that a greater number of them entered university not because of a desire to pursue knowledge, but because of other factors, such as pressure from parents and a desire for a better job.

The findings are indeed very interesting. Generally, learners from both modes displayed a similar pattern with regard to approaches to studying preferred but the distance learners seemed to be more effective and committed. A possible contributory factor may be that generally the distance learners are more mature learners who are genuinely interested in improving themselves.



### 8.3.2.3 Analysis of approaches to studying preferred by learners of different proficiency levels

#### *Presentation of results of the distance learners*

Fig.8.8 gives the mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels.

Category	Lo learners		Av learners		Hi learners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Deep Approach	3.25	0.34	3.27	0.31	3.29	0.35
Strategic Approach	3.10	0.37	3.11	0.36	3.07	0.32
Surface Approach	2.88	0.36	2.85	0.31	2.74	0.28
Extrinsic Motivation	2.85	0.57	2.81	0.60	2.75	0.47
Academic Self- Confidence	2.67	0.45	2.69	0.48	2.68	0.50
Lack of Direction	1.77	0.59	1.69	0.58	1.76	0.60

SD =Standard deviation

---

Fig. 8.8 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels

From the figure, it can be seen that the mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels followed the same pattern, with the mean scores for the Deep Approach and Strategic Approach higher than that for the Surface Approach. The mean scores for the other three categories also followed the same order, with

Extrinsic Motivation having the highest mean scores followed by Academic Self-Confidence and Lack of Direction.

A comparison of mean scores across proficiency levels revealed significant result only for the Surface Approach. The mean score of the High proficiency distance learners was significantly lower than that of the Low proficiency distance learners [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 2.91 (2/304)$ ]

### **Presentation of results of the on-campus learners**

Fig.8.9 gives the mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different proficiency levels.

Category	Lo learners		Av learners		Hi learners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Deep Approach	3.15	0.27	3.07	0.33	3.09	0.31
Strategic Approach	3.09	0.31	2.92	0.34	2.95	0.38
Surface Approach	2.90	0.32	2.89	0.35	2.76	0.34
Extrinsic Motivation	2.90	0.55	2.91	0.48	2.80	0.50
Academic Self- Confidence	2.64	0.41	2.49	0.45	2.63	0.44
Lack of Direction	1.88	0.66	1.86	0.55	1.89	0.56

SD =Standard deviation

Fig. 8.9 Mean scores of on-campus learners from the three different proficiency levels



The figure revealed that the mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different proficiency levels followed the same pattern to that of the distance learners, with the mean scores for the Deep Approach and Strategic Approach being higher than that for the Surface Approach. The mean scores for the other three categories also followed the same order, with Extrinsic Motivation having the highest mean score, followed by Academic Self-Confidence and Lack of Direction.

A comparison of mean scores across proficiency levels revealed significant results for the Strategic Approach, Surface Approach and Academic Self-Confidence. For Strategic Approach, the mean scores of Low Proficiency on-campus learners was significantly higher than that of the Average Proficiency on-campus learners [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 8.44 (2/360)$ ]. For Surface Approach, the mean scores of the Low Proficiency on-campus learners and the Average Proficiency on-campus learners were significantly higher than that of the High Proficiency on-campus learners [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 5.98 (2/360)$ ]. For Academic Self-Confidence, the mean scores of the Low proficiency on-campus learners and the High proficiency on-campus learners were significantly higher than the Average Proficiency on-campus learners [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 4.68 (2/360)$ ].

### **Discussion of results**

The results revealed that there was no difference between the distance learners and on-campus learners of different proficiency levels as far as pattern of preferences was concerned. But, comparisons of mean scores across proficiency levels revealed some significant differences. They suggested that more High Proficiency distance learners were more effective learners, in the sense that they utilised fewer Surface Approach strategies, than Low Proficiency distance learners. The same findings were found in on-campus learners. This finding confirmed the general belief that learners

of lower proficiency use less desirable methods of studying than learners of high proficiency level.

The comparison of mean scores between the on-campus learners of different proficiency levels also revealed that the High Proficiency on-campus learners were more confident academically than the Average Proficiency on-campus learners. This is understandable but, surprisingly, the results also showed that the Low Proficiency on-campus learners were more confident than the Average Proficiency on-campus learners. Besides, they also revealed that the Low Proficiency on-campus learners were inclined to be more strategically-oriented than the Average Proficiency on-campus learners. This hinted at the possibility that the Low proficiency on-campus learners may be more intrinsically motivated than the Average proficiency on-campus learners.



### 8.3.2.4 Analysis of approaches to studying preferred by learners of different disciplines

#### *Presentation of results of the distance learners*

Fig.8.10 gives the mean scores of the distance learners from the three different disciplines.

Category	SocSc group		ApplSc group		BusAdm group A	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Deep Approach	3.27	0.32	3.20	0.33	3.26	0.34
Strategic Approach	3.13	0.36	3.01	0.38	3.10	0.34
Surface Approach	2.85	0.34	2.79	0.32	2.86	0.61
Extrinsic Motivation	2.80	0.55	2.68	0.52	2.85	0.36
Academic Self- Confidence	2.77	0.46	2.50	0.47	2.67	0.44
Lack of Direction	1.75	0.60	1.77	0.59	1.74	0.59

SD = Standard deviation

---

Fig. 8.10 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three different disciplines

The figure revealed that the mean scores of the distance learners from the three disciplines followed the same pattern as that of the three proficiency levels.

A comparison of mean scores across disciplines revealed significant results for only Academic Self-Confidence. The mean scores of learners from the SocSc group and BusAdm group were significantly higher than that from the ApplSc group [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 7.71 (2/344)$ ].

### **Presentation of results of the on-campus learners**

Fig. 8.11 gives the mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different disciplines.

Category	Soc.Sc. group		Appl.Sc group		Bus.Adm. group	
	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	Mean
Deep Approach	0.25	3.13	0.31	3.11	0.33	3.10
Strategic Approach	0.34	2.96	0.36	2.99	0.37	3.01
Surface Approach	0.54	2.83	0.35	2.90	0.48	2.93
Extrinsic Motivation	0.36	2.82	0.52	2.84	0.34	2.83
Academic Self- Confidence	0.44	2.55	0.45	2.56	0.45	2.64
Lack of Direction	0.60	2.06	0.61	1.86	0.57	1.82

SD = Standard deviation

Fig. 8.11 Mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different disciplines



The figure revealed that the mean scores of the on-campus learners followed the same pattern as that of the distance learners. A comparison of mean scores across disciplines revealed significant results for only the Lack of Direction category. The mean score of learners from the SocSc group was significantly higher than that of the BusAdm group [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 3.91 (2/366)$ ].

### **Discussion of results**

The results reiterated earlier findings that there was no difference between the distance learners and the on-campus learners as far as pattern of preferences was concerned. Comparisons of mean scores across disciplines, however revealed some significant differences. In the case of the distance learners, the results suggested that learners from the AppSc. group seemed to be the least confident academically among learners from the three disciplines. This hinted at the possibility that more distance learners from the ApplSc group may have difficulty studying via the distance learning mode than learners from the other two disciplines.

As for the on-campus learners, learners from the SocSc group seemed to be more uncertain about the reasons why they had decided to pursue a university education in comparison to those from the BusAdm group. This is a very interesting finding and I believe it results from the way places are allocated in Malaysian Universities. Of the three disciplines, BusAdm is the most popular and SocSc is the least popular. Students who do not qualify for the more popular disciplines, but qualify for university admissions will be automatically allocated places in Social Sciences. This may explain why more students from the Social Science faculty are uncertain about their goals.

### 8.3.2.5 Comparison of approaches to studying across modes and across proficiency levels

#### Presentation of results

Fig.8.12 presents the significant results obtained from a comparison of mean scores across modes and across proficiency levels.

Proficiency	Scale	Mean score		SD		F (df)
		distance learners	On-campus learner	distance learners	on-campus learners	
Lo	Deep Approach	<u>3.25</u>	3.15	0.34	0.27	6.48*(1/293)
Av	Deep Approach	<u>3.27</u>	3.07	0.31	0.33	21.99**(1/223)
	Strategic Approach	<u>3.12</u>	2.92	0.36	0.34	16.71**(1/222)
	Academic Self-Confidence	<u>2.69</u>	2.49	0.48	0.45	9.59*(1/222)
Hi	Deep Approach	<u>3.29</u>	3.09	0.35	0.31	11.28**(1/149)

SD = Standard deviation

Note: Underlined scores = higher scores

---

Fig. 8.12 Comparison of mean scores across modes and across proficiency levels.



A comparison of mean scores of Low Proficiency learners revealed that the mean score of the distance learners was significantly higher than the on-campus learners for the Deep Approach. For Average Proficiency learners, the mean scores of the distance learners were higher than the on-campus learners for the Deep Approach, Strategic Approach and Academic Self-Confidence. For High Proficiency learners, the mean score of the distance learners was higher than the on-campus learners for only the Deep Approach.

### ***Discussion of results***

The results suggested that distance learners of all proficiency levels seemed to be more effective learners than the on-campus learners as they used more Deep Approach studying techniques. In the case of Average Proficiency learners, besides being more effective, they also appeared to be more committed, motivated and more confident academically than the on-campus learners. The findings clearly suggested that, generally, distance learners seemed to displayed more desirable methods of studying than the on-campus learners. This is particularly encouraging since the distance learners are studying independently most of the time.

### 8.3.2.6 Comparison of approaches to studying across modes and across disciplines

#### Presentation of results

Discipline	Scale	Mean score		SD		F (df)
		distance learners	On-campus learner	distance learners	On-campus learners	
SocSc group	Deep Approach	<u>3.27</u>	3.13	0.32	0.25	10.52**(1/224)
	Strategic Approach	<u>3.13</u>	2.96	0.36	0.34	12.01**(1/224)
	Academic Self-Confidence	<u>2.77</u>	2.55	0.46	0.44	11.26**(1/224)
	Lack of Direction	1.75	<u>2.06</u>	0.60	0.60	12.72**(1/224)
ApplSc. group	Deep Approach	<u>3.20</u>	3.11	0.33	0.31	3.83*(1/200)
	Surface Approach	2.79	<u>2.90</u>	0.32	0.35	4.58*(1/200)
	Extrinsic Motivation	2.68	<u>2.84</u>	0.52	0.52	4.42*(1/200)
BusAdm group	Deep Approach	<u>3.26</u>	3.10	0.34	0.33	15.64**(1/286)
	Strategic Approach	<u>3.10</u>	3.01	0.34	0.37	4.93*(1/286)

SD = Standard deviation

Fig. 8.13 Comparison of mean scores across modes and across disciplines

A comparison of mean scores revealed that in the case of learners from the SocSc group, the mean score(s) of the distance learners were significantly higher than the on-campus learners for the Deep Approach, Strategic Approach and Academic Self-confidence and was significantly lower for the Lack of Direction. For learners from the ApplSc group, the mean score of the distance learners was significantly higher than the on-campus learners for Deep Approach and were significantly lower than the on-campus learners for Surface Approach and Extrinsic Motivation. For



BusAdm learners, the mean scores of the distance learners were significantly higher than the on-campus learners for the Deep Approach, and the Strategic Approach.

### ***Discussion of results***

The results suggested that the distance learners from all three disciplines seemed to utilise Deep Approach studying techniques more than the on-campus learners. Besides, the distance learners from the ApplSc group used fewer Surface Approach studying techniques than on-campus learners, and learners from the SocSc and BusAdm groups utilised more Strategic Approach techniques than the on-campus learners. The findings suggested that the distance learners were not only more effective learners but also more committed and motivated.

With regard to 'negative strategies' classified under Extrinsic Motivation and Lack of Direction categories, more on-campus learners were more likely to use them. More on-campus learners from the Social Science faculty lacked direction and were unsure of their educational goals. This can be attributed to the method of placement practised by Malaysian Universities. Since no such method of placement was imposed on the distance learners, it appeared that less of them were confronted with this predicament. More on-campus learners from the Applied Science faculty were also more likely to be motivated by extrinsic factors, such as qualifications and job opportunities. The results further supported the earlier claim that the distance learners used more desirable methods of studying than the on-campus learners.

### 8.3.3 Factor Analysis

It was decided to carry out factor analysis as it would allow a comparison of the constructs identified from a Malaysian higher education context to be compared with constructs derived from other contexts and to extend the boundary of knowledge on student approaches to studying. There are a number of ways of reporting these factor analysis data. I felt that the most methodical way of analysing the data was to compare the factors of the distance learners and on-campus learners with those of Entwistle and Ramsden's (1983) to find out to what extent they resemble those of their study. Subsequently, other relevant studies would be drawn upon to lend further support to the analysis.

To begin with, principal component factor analysis was performed (with SPSS 9.0 programme) upon the scores which the distance learners and the on-campus learners obtained on the subscales of NASI, using varimax ® (orthogonal) rotation with Kaiser normalisation. This exercise yielded a three-factor solution for the distance learners which accounted for 55.88% of the variance and a four-factor solution for the on-campus learners which accounted for 57.08% of the variance. Factors I and II can be regarded as the most important factors for both groups of learners. Factor I accounted for 32.56% of the variance for the distance learners and 28.60% of the variance for the on-campus learners. As for factor II, it accounted for 16.18% of the variance for the distance learners and 15.44% of the variance for the on-campus learners. Factor III only accounted for 7.21% of the variance in the distance learners and 7.17% of the variance in the on-campus learners. Factor IV, which was only present in the on-campus learners, accounted for only 6.5% of the variance of the on-campus learners. The resulting pattern factor matrix is presented in Fig. 8.14. The exercise was repeated with oblimin (oblique) rotation. The factor solution produced was very similar to the one produced by the varimax ® rotation. Thus, I felt it was not necessary to discuss both sets of factor solutions. In the subsequent discussion I am only going to discuss the factor solution arising from the varimax rotation. Low



loadings of below 0.4 will not be considered. However, loadings below 0.4 but above 0.3 will be considered in cases of cross-loadings.

		Factors of distance learners			Factors of On-campus learners			
		I	II	III	I	II	III	IV
I Deep Approach	1. Looking for Meaning	0.676	0.391		0.726			0.600
	2. Active Interest/Critical Stance	0.598			0.471			
	3. Relating and Organising Ideas	0.745	0.314		0.611		0.327	
	4. Use Evidence and Logic	0.736			0.738			
II Surface Approach	1. Relying on Memorising	0.445	0.475	0.713	(0.212)	0.583		
	2. Difficulty in Making Senses		0.591	0.382		0.804		
	3. Unrelatedness		0.741		0.350	0.550	-0.313	
	4. Concern about Coping							
III Strategic Approach	1. Determination to Excel	0.695			0.686			
	2. Effort in Studying	0.792			0.651		0.446	
	3. Organised Studying	0.758					0.746	
	4. Time Management	0.676					0.730	
IV Lack of Direction				0.743				0.652
V Academic Self- confidence		0.696	-0.326				0.640	
VI Extrinsic Motivation				0.587		0.380		0.535

VII Syllabus- bounded- ness		(0.277)	0.621		0.466	0.427		
--------------------------------------	--	---------	-------	--	-------	-------	--	--

\* Loadings below 0.3 were omitted except for those in parentheses

Eigenvalues above 1

Fig. 8.14 Factor solutions of the NASI in the distance learners and the On-campus learners

### 8.3.3.1 Presentation of results

In the case of the distance learners, all the subscales related to Deep Approach had high loadings on Factor I. Besides that, all the subscales related to Strategic Approach, the Relying on Memorising subscale and the Academic Self-confidence scale also had high loadings on this factor. However, it has to be pointed out that Relying on Memorising also had high loading on Factor II. As for the on-campus learners, similarly, all the subscales related to Deep Approach had high loadings on Factor I. However, unexpectedly, the Active Interest/Critical Stance subscale also loaded highly on Factor IV. As for the subscales of Strategic Approach, in this case, only two subscales i.e. 'Determination to Excel' and 'Effort in Studying' had high loadings on Factor I. Syllabus-boundedness also had high loading on this factor.

In the case of the distance learners, all the subscales of Surface Approach except for the 'Difficulty in Making sense' subscale had high loadings on Factor II. Syllabus-boundedness also had high loading on this factor. In the case of the on-campus learners, all the subscales of Surface Approach had high loadings on Factor II. Besides loading on factor I, Syllabus boundedness also loaded (almost equally high) on this factor.



Factor III, in the case of the distance learners, consisted of only three scales/subscales: Difficulty in Making Sense, Lack of Direction and Extrinsic Motivation. Factor III, in the case of the on-campus learners, had more items: three of the four subscales under Strategic Approach, i.e., Effort in Studying, Organised Studying and Time Management loaded highly on it. There was a clear case of cross loading in Effort in Studying as it also loaded highly on Factor I. Besides, Academic Self-confidence also loaded highly on it.

As for Factor IV, this was present only in the on-campus learners. It consisted of three items: Active Interest/Critical Stance, Lack of Direction and Extrinsic Motivation.

### 8.3.3.2 Discussion of results

The analysis of data shows that Factor I consisted of all the subscales of Deep Approach plus other components associated with effective learning approaches, except for the Relying on Memorising component. In view of this, it can be classified as being related to Meaning Approach (as defined by Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). The same applies to the on-campus learners except in this case the unrelated component is Syllabus boundedness. The fact that both Relying on Memorising' (in the case of the distance learners) and Syllabus boundedness (in the case of the on-campus learners) loaded ambiguously on two factors is intriguing and more in depth discussion of this will be presented later in this section.

With regard to Factor II, for the distance learners, three out of four of the subscales of Surface Approach loaded highly on it. Syllabus-boundedness, which is generally considered as an ineffective approach to learning, also loaded highly on it. Thus, it is reasonable to claim that this factor is related to Reproducing Orientation (as defined by Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). Almost the same components also loaded highly

on Factor II in the case of the on-campus learners. The only difference is that in this case all four subscales of Surface Approach loaded highly on it and that Syllabus-boundedness crossed loaded between Factor II and I. This factor is even more convincingly a representation of Reproducing Orientation.

Thus, it can be seen here that the two principal orientations towards studying (identified by Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983) that were found to be stable and replicable in many studies (see for e.g., Morgan, et. al, 1980; Harper and Kember, 1986; Kember and Gow, 1990 and many others) are also clearly evident in this study. As for the other factors, they showed a much less clear relationship with the other dimensions identified by Entwistle and Ramsden in the case of distance learners. A closer examination revealed that the three components of Factor III for the distance learners appeared to be all ineffective learning approaches. But, since literature revealed that it is incorrect to view Extrinsic Motivation solely in a negative light (Kembar, 2000), it makes the task of classifying this factor even more complicated. I would tentatively suggest that it is a narrow mixed orientation indexed by Lack of Direction, Extrinsic Motivation and Difficulty in Making sense. Since it accounted for only a very small percentage of the variance (7.2%), it is relatively unimportant and is a pattern evident in a very small proportion of the distance learners.

In the case of on-campus learners, however, Factor III seemed to resemble that of Entwistle and Ramsden's Achieving Orientation to a certain extent as three out of four subscales of Strategic Approach plus Academic Self-confidence loaded highly on it. Thus, it appeared that in the case of distance learners, only the two main factors resemble that of Entwistle and Ramsden, whereas in the case of on-campus learners, three main factors resemble those of Entwistle and Ramsden. These findings are indeed interesting. They support those of Morgan et al. (1980), Harper and Kembar (1986) and Richardson et al.(1999), who also found two main factors in Open University students. Thus, it would appear that the distinction between a reproducing orientation and a meaning orientation is valid for conventional as well for the distance



learning students in most contexts (including the Malaysian context), but Entwistle and Ramsden's pattern of three main factors is more applicable to conventional students. The similarities between this study and those taken in the Western context point to the applicable nature of much of the research undertaken on approaches to studying based on Entwistle and Ramsden's model to the Malaysian context.

In on-campus learners there was an extra factor which accounted for 6.5% of the variance. Like factor III of the distance learners, it was an ambiguous factor. It consisted of the components of Lack of Direction and Extrinsic Motivation but, besides that, instead of a Surface Approach subscale, it consisted of a Deep Approach subscale. I would tentatively classified this as narrow mixed orientation indexed by Lack of Direction, Extrinsic Motivation and Active Interest/Critical Stance. Since this factor accounted for only 6.5% of the variance, it is not a very important factor and shall not be discussed any further.

Next, I will discuss the ambiguity arising from cross-loadings. The analysis revealed two sets of cross-loadings which are worth investigating. The data revealed that the Relying on Memorising subscale loaded ambiguously across Factor I (Meaning Orientation) and Factor II (Reproducing Orientation) for the distance learners, but not for the on-campus learners. It also revealed that Syllabus-boundedness loaded ambiguously across Factor I (Meaning Orientation) and II (Reproducing Orientation) in the case of the on-campus learners.

Recent literature has pointed out that memorising should not be considered solely as rote learning as it entails very much more than that especially in Eastern cultures. Studies (by Kember and Gow, 1990; Biggs, 1996; Gow et al, 1996; Marton, Dall'Alba and Kun, 1996; Watkins, 1996 and Kember, 2000) reported observations of memorisation occurring in conjunction with understanding. Marton, Dall'Alba and Kun (1996) further reported that memorisation could be used to reach understanding

in addition to understanding preceding memorisation. In the case of the distance learners of this study, it is clear that the cross-loading does suggest the presence of both positive and negative connotations. In the case of the on-campus learners, it loaded highly only on Surface Approach suggesting mainly negative connotation in the case of these learners. What we can deduce from this finding is that the pattern of memorisation being used in conjunction with understanding is more prevalent in the case of the distance learners than in the case of the on-campus learners.

Similar to Memorisation, Syllabus-boundedness can be viewed as having positive and negative connotations depending on circumstances. For example, a conscious effort to study within the syllabus can be viewed positively as an attempt to be disciplined and a desire to be focused. Conversely, it can be viewed negatively as an inability to read beyond the required text. The fact that Syllabus-boundedness loaded almost equally on both the Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation in the case of on-campus learners, suggested the presence of positive and negative connotations. On the other hand, in the case of distance learners it loaded highly on Reproducing Orientation suggesting the presence of mainly negative connotations.

### 8.3.4 Overall discussion of results

Through factor analysis, it was possible to identify two principal orientations towards studying. These two factors are similar to Entwistle and Ramsden's Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation. As for the other two factors they are found to be much less distinct. Despite that, it is possible to suggest the existence of a third factor that somewhat resembles Entwistle and Ramsden's Achieving Orientation, in the case of on-campus learners. These results are consistent with those of Entwistle and colleagues and others undertaken in various parts of the world. What we can conclude from this is that the distinction between a



Reproducing Orientation and a Meaning Orientation in the Malaysian context is as valid for the distance learners as well as the on-campus learners.

Mean score analyses within modes further supported the presence of a similar pattern of preferences with regard to approaches to studying. It revealed that both the distance learners and the on-campus learners indicated a similar pattern of preferences with regard to the different approaches to studying, notwithstanding whichever mode, proficiency level or discipline they were from. They generally showed a preference for a Deep Approach to studying, were fairly motivated and committed to their studies, had fairly good study habits and were able to manage time fairly well. They were more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated. The level of self-confidence was generally below the level of Extrinsic Motivation and they did not encounter the problem of Lack of Direction. These similarities reconfirmed the 'portability' of the ASI from one system to another and strongly suggested that mainstream research literature based on the study of campus-based students will be valid for describing the approaches to studying of Malaysian ESL distance learners.

Mean scores analyses across modes also revealed that more distance learners utilised Deep Approach techniques in comparison to the on-campus learners. They were also more motivated, committed, systematic, well-organised and able to manage time better than the on-campus learners. They also indicated greater confidence academically. This was particularly evident in the case of Average Proficiency learners. The on-campus learners, on the other hand, were less confident, less motivated and uncertain of their educational goals and seemed to be more motivated by a desire to obtain an academic qualification, rather than a desire to pursue knowledge. They also tended to utilise more Surface Approach techniques than the on-campus learners. Their strong point was that they appeared less bound by the syllabuses, but this might be a result of the fact that they were on-campus learners and might not be an intrinsic strength in them. These findings are very encouraging in the case of the distance learners. It suggests that the distance learners in the

Malaysian context possess more desirable forms of studying/learning behaviour than the on-campus learners. These findings are in keeping with those undertaken in other distance learning contexts (Harper and Kember, 1986 and Richardson et al., 1999) and contribute to the general belief that these differences are caused by factors related to a difference in age such as differences in level of interest, experience, maturity and self-reliance, which all influence study behaviour. As for the on-campus learners, their preference for less desirable learning/studying behaviour may be a result of orientations they acquired from the examination-orientated mode of learning and studying in Malaysian schools.

However, item analysis revealed evidence of greater reliance on memorisation in the case of the distance learners. Factor analysis revealed another interesting feature i.e. the pattern of memorisation being used in conjunction with understanding (Kember, 1996; Watkins, 1996) was more prevalent in the distance learners than in the on-campus learners. These findings suggested that it was incorrect to assume that more distance learners were prone towards rote learning than the on-campus learners. In fact, the reverse was possibly more correct. Since a high proportion of the distance learners seem to use memorisation as a means towards understanding, the proportion of them using it to memorise without understanding was less prevalent than in the case of the on-campus learners. Studies by Kember (1996) suggested that the way the curriculum is designed and the way the course is taught can affect the learning approach which students adopt. Thus, if a teacher uses a didactic, spoon-feeding approach which does not encourage students to adopt a Deep Approach or to think critically, his/her students may be orientated to use Surface Approach to learning. In the Malaysian context, the higher proportion of rote learning among the on-campus learners may also be due to the exam-oriented approach and the teacher-centred approach used in schools which do not give much room for creative and critical thinking.



With regard to Syllabus-boundedness, as discussed earlier, the Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient for it was too low for it to be classified as a category and it had to be excluded from the scale analysis. In spite of that, it was possible to obtain some interesting findings from the item analysis. It was found that the distance learners indicated a higher preference for highly structured courses and diligent checking of course schedules than on-campus learners. These characteristics, I believe, arose from over-anxiety and fear that they had not been studying what were required of them and are also an indication that the course programmes, possibly, lacked sufficient guidelines and well-planned structures. They might also be aware that they had to take responsibility for following course direction and were anxious not to get it wrong. However, they did not indicate a higher preference for 'reading very little beyond what's required for completing assignments. text' than on-campus learners suggesting that they were less likely of displaying this weakness than on-campus learners.

Mean score analyses revealed that both the High proficiency distance learners and the on-campus learners were generally more effective learners in comparison to those of lower proficiency levels. The High proficiency on-campus learners were also found to be more confident academically than the Average proficiency on-campus learners. These findings are not unusual and comply with expectations that learners of higher proficiency will manifest more desirable approaches to studying. However, surprisingly, Low Proficiency on-campus learners were found to be more strategically-oriented and more confident academically than Average Proficiency learners. The reason for this needs to be determined by further research.

A comparison of the distance learners from the three disciplines further revealed that the distance learners from the ApplSc group were the least confident academically. These findings indicated that learners from the SocSc and BusAdm groups displayed more desirable approaches to studying than those from the ApplSc group. The results supported Ramsden and Entwistle (1981) to a certain extent as they also

found on-campus arts students to be more likely than science students to manifest a Deep Approach and other aspects of Meaning Orientation. But the results contradicted those of Harper and Kember (1986) who found similar results in both distance learning and campus-based students. They did not support that of Morgan et al. (1980) either. Richardson et al.'s results (1999) on the effects of academic subjects on approaches to studying were also rather mixed. This reaffirmed the general belief that approaches to studying vary with academic context. In the Malaysian context, the results do contribute to the belief that Science Students, due to the nature of the discipline they are studying, tend not to manifest Deep Approaches and critical thinking strategies.

An interesting finding regarding on-campus learners from the SocSc group is that they seemed to be more uncertain about the reasons why they decided to pursue a university education than those from the BusAdm group. In my opinion, this uncertainty is probably due to the fact that many of them were not given the disciplines they applied for when admitted into the university.

## **8.4 Implications of findings to teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context**

As discussed, the underlying constructs and the pattern of preferences of both the distance learners and the on-campus learners are the same. A highly probable cause for differences between them is factor related to differences in age. In view of that, in designing a suitable ESL programme for Malaysian distance learners, it is possible to draw on the extensive literature carried on-campus learners in the fields of student learning and teaching and learning of English as L2. However, considerations should also be given to literature on adult learning. The differences between the learners from the two different modes also suggested that it would not be advisable



to continue the practice of offering the same courses and using the same materials for both groups of learners. Instead, the ESL distance learning programme should reflect the needs of the distance learners. Since the distance learners are more mature learners capable of utilising 'effective' learning approaches, the courses designed for them should allow greater flexibility in choosing subjects and greater opportunity to work at their own pace. But, clear guidelines and well-structured programmes should be prioritised to avoid insecurity arising from uncertainty about what is expected of them. The extent of flexibility should also vary according to proficiency levels. What is suggested is that greater flexibility should be given to learners of higher proficiency and more guided courses should be offered to learners of lower proficiency levels.

Courses offered should also be innovative and encourage critical thinking. Although memorisation with understanding, as revealed by research, is not a negative thing, research has also shown that Asian students are receptive to innovative programmes (Kember and Gow, 1992; Kember and McKay, 1996 and Kember et al., 1997) and these programmes will enable them to enjoy learning more. Instances of rote learning will also be reduced as students learn more 'effective' ways of learning. The need for innovative ESL courses is particularly vital in the case of learners from the ApplSc group. Since there is some evidence that they tend to adopt less desirable approaches to studying and studying, it is essential to expose them to more materials that encourage to think critically otherwise they will be ineffective as ESL learners.

## CHAPTER 9

### Study Three

# Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses: Focusing on the New Course Perceptions Questionnaire

## 9.1 Introduction

This study is a follow-up to study Two. In study Two it was pointed out that there was a dearth of literature into the approaches to studying of distance learners. The study was able to establish some very useful characteristics with regard to Malaysian ESL distance learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying in general. Study Three is designed to carry the investigation a step further by finding **out to what extent these approaches influence perceptions of learning of English as L2**. This is an uncharted territory. To my knowledge, there has been no research undertaken that establishes the associations between approaches to studying and perceptions of English Proficiency Courses in the same manner as I intend to do in this study. There are, however, a considerable number of studies on the associations between approaches to studying and perceptions of content courses undertaken along the same line as Entwistle and Ramsden's studies (1983). In the section that follows, Entwistle and Ramsden's development of the Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ) and related studies carried out by them which provide the impetus to the



present thesis will be reviewed in depth. Other studies to support their work will be included where relevant.

Thus, in this chapter I will begin by giving a detailed description of the development of the CPQ by Entwistle and Ramsden. A review of some of their studies which used the CPQ are also included to provide some background information and to enable a better idea of what to expect from the present study. Subsequently, I will proceed to the research design of my study. In that section, I will first begin by describing the scope and objectives of the study and the rationale for using a revised version of the CPQ named New Course Perception Questionnaire (NCPQ) and the interviews which will enable a better understanding of how and why the questionnaire was chosen. This will be followed by the research methodology section. Then, I will proceed to analyse the data of the NCPQ quantitatively with SPSS (9.0). This will be accompanied by the relevant discussions of the results. The data of the interviews, is to be used to enhance the questionnaire data which, will be analysed qualitatively in the next chapter. The implications of the findings of NCPQ for the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context will be discussed together with the implications of the findings of the interviews at the end of the next chapter.

## **9.2 Entwistle and Ramsden's Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ)**

### **9.2.1 Circumstances leading to the development of the CPQ**

The CPQ were developed by Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) primarily to throw more light on the differences between academic departments at a time when there was not much research of such nature. The findings of two sets of related studies had a great influence towards the development of the questionnaire. The first set looked at the cultures of academic disciplines in terms of theoretical differences between areas of knowledge, and staff and student attitudes. The most pervasive difference identified was between Arts and Social Science departments, on one hand, and the Science department, on the other hand. Lecturers in the Science departments were found to be more formal in their teaching methods and less 'permissive' in their attitudes to student and student learning than Arts teachers (Roe, 1956; Gamson, 1966; Thompson et al, 1969; Wilson et al, 1975). Corresponding differences had been observed in the students attracted to Arts and Science departments. Findings revealed that student orientations and personality were systematically related to their field of study. "Arts and Social Science departments appear to attract more nonconformist, radical, 'person-orientated', neurotic, flexible, individualistic, and divergent students; science departments are populated more heavily with stable, 'thing-orientated' convergent students" (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:113). Gaff et al's study (1976) of students in four departments at a Dutch university used a questionnaire survey to examine 'atmosphere' in the departments and also found clear evidences of differences between the departments:



... they constitute markedly different learning environments. The pressure-packed, heavily prescribed nature of chemistry; the relaxed somewhat uncertain climate of law; the memory-orientated, highly structured environment in medicine; and the free-wheeling, independent atmosphere of psychology --- these distinctive 'atmosphere of each educational environment are apparent from this initial analysis.'

(Gaff et al, cited by Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:140)

The second group of studies were concerned with another dimension of departmental context i.e., students' evaluation of teaching. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) observed that the limited number of studies of academic departments in higher education as learning contexts clearly suggested that "students' perceptions and evaluations were associated with the approaches to studying" (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:119). One of the studies that suggested this was carried out by Fransson (1977) in one of the experiments at Gothenburg. In his study he found that Deep Approaches were functionally related to interest in the learning material, and Surface Approaches to threatening assessment conditions. Laurillard (1978) further showed that students' approaches to studying tasks in their everyday studies were associated with their perceptions of the purposes of the task. Besides, writers as diverse as Newman (1852), Pattison (1876), Veblen (1957) and Rogers (1969) had variously argued that rigid assessment systems, impersonal staff-student relationships and lack of choice over method and content had damaging effects on the quality of students' learning experiences. On the other hand, commitment to teaching amongst staff and freedom in learning facilitated student understanding.

There was also empirical evidence to support that assessment, teaching, and course structures in academic departments were critical variables in the determination of student learning, and that student perceptions were useful ways to measure these contextual characteristics. Becker et al (1968) studying Kansas University students' perceptions of their academic experiences argued that students reacted mainly to the environmental emphasis on grading. He found that students learned the requirements of the social situation which rewarded a high grade-point-average and turned

themselves into the sort of persons the academic context demands. Synder (1971), and Miller and Partlett (1974) studies supported Becker et al's conclusion. Ramsden further found that a perceived lack of any direction or helpful guidance by lecturers in an independent study course led to the development of negative attitudes to learning and when more guidance was given their attitudes improved. However, Brennan and Percy (1977), and Percy and Ramsden (1980) found that students valued independent learning and the opportunity to control the pace of their learning. Pascarella and Terenzini (1977; 1978), further found a positive correlation between staff-student relationships and three dependent variables: academic performance, personal development, and intellectual development. Fearn-Wannan (1979) also found students perceptions of their lecturers' behaviour and satisfaction with the teaching to be a determinant of performance. It would be interesting to see which of these views are most applicable to this study.

The studies also revealed many similarities in the components students used to assess the perceived quality of teaching. Kulik and McKeachie (1975) in his review of eleven factor analytical studies of ratings of lecturers identified considerable overlap in the factors discovered. Among the common components were: the lecturer's skills as a teacher, his/her rapport with students, and the amount of work students were expected to tackle. Other investigations (see for e.g., Payne and Hobbs, 1974; Entwistle and Percy, 1971; Brennan and Percy, 1977; Amir and Krausz, 1974) noted the importance of students' evaluations of lecturers' concern for student learning, the amount of choice available of method and content of learning, social relationships between students, interpersonal relationship between staff and students, and transparency of grading procedures.

What Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) found missing in these studies were the **exploration of the effects of different subject areas and perceived 'quality' of departments or courses on students' approaches.** In view of that they carried out some interviews which concentrated on students' perceptions of disciplinary and



other differences in the departments in which they studied. Ten Social Science staff, thirteen Social Science students, three Applied Science staff and nine Applied Science students were interviewed. The staff were asked about their aims as teachers, the structure of their courses, how they thought students tackled the learning tasks they were set, their perceptions of differences between students and the reasons for their success or failure, and the kinds of contact they had with students. The staff interviews were complemented by study of course documents in the two departments which included recent examination and test papers, syllabuses, and course handbooks. As for the students, they were asked about the characteristics of the courses, and teaching and assessment in their department. Specific questions were put about the content of lectures, seminars, and tutorials, and about the student's relationship with members of staff.

The interviews revealed that students in both departments used similar constructs to describe the environments in which they were learning. These constructs were consistent with previous research on students' perceptions of departmental environments. Entwistle and Ramsden further found that particularly important to students were the effects of their lecturers: the extent to which they seemed to encourage learning, lectured effectively, and offered help with study problems. Assessment methods and workload were also important to students in both departments, although they were seen rather differently; the Applied Science students felt that a great deal of pressure was needed in order to 'get through' the syllabus, while the Social Science students would have preferred a much more lighter workload. Formality or informality of teaching and learning (e.g., lectures versus discussion methods) were also often mentioned by the students. Students were able to both identify differences within departments on all these criteria as well as speak meaningfully about the department as a whole. Moreover, students related their approaches to studying to a number of characteristics of the learning context. On occasion they attributed the use of a Deep or Surface Approach to the influence of environment. For example, they attributed the tendency to use Surface Approaches to tests, given periodically.

In the case of staff, Entwistle and Ramsden found that it was not possible to discern any clear patterns in the interviews. There were wider differences in the comments they made in comparison to the students. More apparent was the fact that many staff had little knowledge of how students tackled learning tasks. In view of the similarities in the constructs used by students in both departments in these preliminary interviews and the parallels between these constructs and those with previous research, they decided to develop the CPQ for identifying and comparing the course perceptions of larger groups of students in a number of departments.

### 9.2.2 Development of the CPQ: Part 1

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) derived the items describing the context of learning through students' eyes from two principal sources: the preliminary student interviews and an earlier study of students' perceptions of courses. The 47 items were sorted into scales reflecting hypothesised dimensions by which students were expected to characterised their learning environments. An attempt was made to choose scales which were capable of distinguishing between subject areas or distinguishing between departments in other ways (e.g., quality of the teaching). The dimensions were chosen after examining the results of the most closely corresponding previous study (Gaff et al., 1976) and in the light of the concepts of framing and staff understanding. The items were provisionally grouped into the following eight scales:



Scale	Description of scale
1. Staff Understanding	the degree to which students feel their teachers provide an acceptant, understanding, and sincere environment for learning
2. Formal Relationship	the extent of formality or informality in staff-student student relationships.
3. Relevance to Work	how closely students feel the curriculum relates to vocational requirements.
4. Frame Strength	items thought to closely relate most closely to the amount of discretion possessed by students in organising their learning, selecting its content, and evaluating their progress.
5. Formal Instruction	the extent to which the department emphasises individual learning or attendance at lectures and classes.
6. Workload 7. External Pressure to Work	the extent of pressure placed on students to conform to deadlines for submitted work, and the amount of materials which students feel they have to cover in the syllabus.
8. Homogeneity of the Department	the degree to which students perceive themselves to be in a department in which the goals of their study are clear to them and shared by most other students.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983:122)

The final version of the CPQ was administered to second year students in four university departments namely Psychology, Engineering, History and Physics – during 1977-78. A slightly amended form was used in two further departments (English and Independent Studies) in 1978.

The results were examined by means of item analysis. Item-scale correlations and percentage agreements to each item were calculated. Alpha factor analysis (chosen because it is specifically designed for use in scale development) was also carried out, using the SPSS programmes. Altogether eight factors were identified. A second analysis was run after removing a number of weaker items and produced similar results. The CPQ scales were then revised to produce eight dimensions (See Fig.9.1)

Dimension	Meaning
Relationships with Students	Closeness of lecturer/student relationships; help and understanding shown to students.
Commitment to Teaching	Commitment of staff to improving teaching and to teaching students at a level appropriate to their current understanding.
Workload	Pressure placed on students in terms of demands of the syllabus and assessment tasks.
Formal Teaching Methods	Formality or informality of teaching and learning (e.g. lectures vs. individual study)
Vocational Relevance	Perceived relevance of courses to students' careers.
Social Climate	Frequency and quality of academic and social relationships between students.
Clear Goals and Standards	Extent to which standards expected of students are clear and unambiguous.
Freedom in Learning	Amount of discretion possessed by students in choosing and organising academic work.

Fig. 9.1 Dimensions of learning environments derived from factor analysis of the first version of the CPQ (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:124)

On inspecting the CPQ results in terms of the eight dimensions in Fig. 9.1, Entwistle and Ramsden found that students saw the process of learning and teaching in quite different ways in the six departments (see, Ramsden, 1979). However, it was possible to discern a clear distinction between Science students (Applied and Natural Science) and Arts students (Social Science and Arts). Science students generally perceived the methods of teaching to be formal where clear goals of studies were established, the contents were of vocational relevance and workload was high, combined with close and co-operative relationships between students. Arts students perceived the environment to be friendly and fairly informal (except for History department). However, they complained about the lack of freedom and desired more opportunity to study on their own. More specifically, Psychology students complained about the heavy workload, and English and History students complained about the lack of relevance of their courses to their future employment.



### 9.2.3 Development of the CPQ: Part 2

Entwistle and Ramsden carried out further interviews on a sample of students who completed the CPQ in the original form. The interviews revealed that the eight main components of perceived learning environments appeared to be stable and replicable (Ramsden, 1981), although the relationships with students and commitment to teaching scales could not be clearly separated. A revised version of the questionnaire was next constructed, consisting of eight six-item scales. Items in the previous version which had not had significant loadings in the factor analysis, or which had low item-scale correlations, were deleted; other items were added to some scales (especially to the freedom in learning scale) in order to produce six-item scales in all cases.

This revised CPQ was administered to a sample of 767 students in nine departments at three universities during 1978. Item analyses largely confirmed the integrity of the revised scales, although the distinction between the relationships with students and commitment to teaching scales again failed to emerge empirically. Alpha-factoring of the items, extracting eight factors, followed by oblique rotation, produced the following eight factors:

Factor	Dimension
I	Relationships with Students plus Commitment to Teaching.
II	Vocational Relevance
III	Formal Teaching
IV	Clear Goals and Standards
V	Workload
VI	Social Climate
VII	Commitment to Teaching and Relationships with Students
VIII	Freedom in Learning (together with smaller loadings on several relationships with students items)

In spite of large differences between individual items in terms of percentage agreements for the nine departments, Entwistle and Ramsden found that item-scale correlations did not differ greatly between the departments, suggesting that the dimension tapped by the scales were generally applicable. Calculations of mean scales values for the departments, disciplines and subject areas confirmed the ability of the questionnaire to identify different departmental learning contexts. The scales of Formal Teaching Methods, Vocational Relevance, and (to a lesser extent) Clear Goals and Standards, Social Climate, and Freedom in Learning, distinguished between Science and Arts and Social Science departments. The other scales mainly seemed to differentiate between departments rather than disciplines. The scales were also found to be related to each other. For example, Freedom in Learning was negatively related to Formal Teaching Methods, but was positively associated with relationships with students.

The final research version of the CPQ was developed by re-ordering the items in the Relationships with Students and Commitment to Teaching scales into two new scales of Good Teaching and Openness to Students. The questionnaire was shortened to 40 items in eight scales by deleting the weakest item in each scale, and some items were rewritten. This questionnaire was administered to 2208 students in 66 departments at the same time as the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI). An analysis of the reliability of the scales was carried out using the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients. It was found that the  $\alpha$  coefficients of the items in each of the scale of the final version of the CPQ were above 0.6 indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency for each of the scales (see Appendix 9A for the items contained in the final version of the CPQ and the Cronbach  $\alpha$  values).

A comparison of mean scores across departments, disciplines and subject areas were conducted. The results confirmed expectations that some of the dimensions of the CPQ would describe differences between subject areas and disciplines, while others



would represent students' perceptions of differences between departments, as can be seen in Fig. 9.2

Scale	Mean (1) Science (2) Social Science (3) Arts	S.D.	Analysis of Variance F (df 2, 63)
Openness to Students	(1) 9.04 (2) 9.31 (3) 8.36	1.47 1.82 2.14	1.42
Social Climate	(1) 11.19 (2) 10.78 (3) 9.33	1.48 1.40 1.72	7.64*
Formal Teaching Methods	(1) 12.17 (2) 6.67 (3) 3.06	1.61 1.37 0.77	232.86*
Clear Goals and Standards	(1) 11.83 (2) 9.62 (3) 7.35	0.89 1.87 1.94	37.88**
Workload	(1) 11.91 (2) 8.86 (3) 10.58	2.26 2.71 2.33	5.95*
Vocational Relevance	(1) 11.21 (2) 7.21 (3) 4.27	2.96 1.42	58.51**
Good Teaching	(1) 11.63 (2) 11.74 (3) 11.63	1.02 1.48 1.65	0.06
Freedom in Learning	(1) 8.24 (2) 10.21 (3) 11.54	1.72 1.46 2.67	15.35**

\* $p < 0.01$  \*\* $p < 0.001$

Fig. 9.2 Students' perceptions of learning contexts in different subject areas  
(Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:128)

Clear Goals and Standards were found to be very much related to subject areas; much more so, incidentally, than any other ASI subscales. The highest scores on all three of these CPQ scales were found in the engineering departments, and the lowest in the English or History departments. The two evaluative scales, Good Teaching and Openness to Students, were also found not to be related to subject area. Besides, the wide ranges of departmental means within each discipline on these scales illustrated how different the departments were perceived to be by their students (see Ramsden and Entwistle, 1981, for details). The remaining CPQ scales appeared to

describe differences between departments and between subject areas. For example, although the Freedom in Learning mean values were higher in Arts and Social Sciences than in scientific subjects, the range of mean scores within each discipline was wide.

Factor analysis of the CPQ scale totals was carried out and they were found to reveal a similar pattern (see Fig. 9.3)

Variables	Factor I	Factor II
Good Teaching	0.76	
Freedom in Learning	0.57	
Openness to Students	0.76	
Social Climate	0.42	0.32
Formal Teaching Methods		0.71
Clear Goals and Standards	0.30	0.57
Workload	(-0.24)	
Vocational Relevance		0.72

Most loadings less than 0.25 are omitted

Factor I: Positive evaluation of teaching and courses

Factor II: Formal vocational teaching

Fig. 9.3 Factor analysis of Course Perceptions scales (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:129)

Entwistle and Ramsden described Factor I as the evaluative dimension as it loaded highly on Good Teaching and Openness to Students. Freedom in Learning also loaded significantly on this factor and they suggested the possibility of this scale being considered as a component of students' evaluations of departments. They described Factor II as representing differences between subject areas, that is, the dimension which distinguished between formal vocational teaching and loosely-structured informal teaching, the former being more common in Science departments and the latter in Arts departments. Further, previous studies have revealed that Clear Goals and Standards, High Vocational Relevance, and Formal Teaching Methods came together with Good Social Climates.



The CPQ was subsequently used by Entwistle and Ramsden to attempt to establish possible links between the scales of the CPQ and the ASI. This will be discussed in detail in the next section.

### **9.3 Entwistle and Ramsden's investigation of the approaches to studying in contrasting departments**

In the previous section it was mentioned that Entwistle and Ramsden were interested to find out **the effects of different subject areas and perceived 'quality' of departments or courses on students approaches**. To put it another way, they were interested to find out how contrasting academic contexts affected approaches to studying. Through the interviews they had managed to identify functional relationships between levels of approach and students' perceptions of the teaching and assessment they had experienced. Besides, the interviews also revealed that the ways students tackled academic tasks were related to the subject area in which they studied. Having developed the CPQ, it was then possible for them to attempt to establish possible links between the scales of the CPQ and the ASI in order to investigate the validity of connections between the two sets of scales and try to disentangle the effects of subject area and departmental organisation through a quantitative approach.

In order to investigate this, Entwistle and Ramsden administered both the ASI and the CPQ to 2208 students in 66 departments of Engineering, Physics, Economics, Psychology, History and English between 1979 and 1980. The scales of both

instruments and their meanings as a given by Entwistle and Ramsden are shown in Fig 9.4

Subscale	Meaning
Deep Approach	Active questioning in learning
Relating Ideas	Relating to other parts of course
Use of Evidence	Relating evidence to conclusions
Intrinsic Motivation	Interest in learning for learning's sake
Surface Approach	Preoccupation with memorisation
Syllabus-boundedness	Relying on staff to define learning tasks
Fear of Failure	Pessimism and anxiety about academic outcomes
Extrinsic Motivation	Interest in courses for the qualifications they offer
Strategic Approach	Awareness of implications of academic demands made by staff
Disorganised Study Methods	Unable to work regularly and effectively
Negative Attitudes to Studying	Lack of interest and application
Achievement Motivation	Competitive and confident
Comprehension Learning	Readiness to map out subject area and think divergently
Globetrotting	Over-ready to jump to conclusions
Operation Learning	Emphasis on facts and logical analysis
Improvvidence	Over-cautious reliance on details
Formal Teaching Methods	Lecturers and classes more important than individual study
Clear Goals and Standards	Assessment standards and ends of studying clearly defined
Workload	Heavy pressures to fulfil task requirements
Vocational Relevance	Perceived relevance of courses to careers
Good Teaching	Well-prepared, helpful, committed teachers
Freedom in Learning	Discretion of students to choose and organise own work
Openness to Students	Friendly staff attitudes and preparedness to adapt to students' needs
Social Climate	Quality of academic and social relationships between students

Fig. 9.4 Subscales of the ASI and the CPQ (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:180)

Their analyses were designed to investigate the following questions:

1. To what extent can differences in students' approaches to studying and perceptions of the context of learning be explained (a) by type of discipline studied (b) by type of department, after controlling for subject area?
2. What links between the two sets of scales can be identified by means of factor analysis?



3. Using departments as unit of analysis rather than individual students, what associations between orientations to studying and course perceptions can be identified? In other words, do context of learning appear to influence approaches to studying?
4. Do some approaches to studying seem to be rewarded more highly (in terms of self-rated performance) in some contexts than others?

### 9.3.1 Differences in students' approaches in contrasting subject areas

Based on previous work, Entwistle and Ramsden proposed certain expectations with regard to how the students from different subject areas would respond to the following subscales.

Subscales likely to be more common with Arts and Social Science Students	Subscales likely to be more common with Science students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehension Learning</li><li>• Improvidence</li><li>• Deep Approach</li><li>• Intrinsic Motivation</li><li>• Relating Ideas</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operation Learning</li><li>• Globetrotting</li><li>• Use of Evidence</li><li>• Extrinsic Motivation</li><li>• Syllabus-boundedness</li></ul>

(Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:181)

As for the rest of the subscales they predicted that there would not be large differences in subject areas. The mean values were examined in two ways: mean values for each of the subscales by subject area (Science, Social Science, and Arts) and mean values for each discipline and each department. An analysis of average scores for departments and subject areas revealed that Operation Learning and Comprehension Learning were associated with types of disciplines in the expected

manner: Operation Learning received higher scores in Science, Comprehension Learning in Arts and Social Science. Globetrotting and Improvidence were also related to type of discipline, but less strongly.

They further found that globetrotting was highest in Psychology departments, and Improvidence in Economics departments. However, they found that Globetrotting was no more common in Arts department than in Science ones. They declared that on this evidence, it could not be stated that learning pathologies were a function of the type of discipline studied.

Deep Approach and Relating Ideas were found to be most common in Arts and Social Science departments, thus confirming earlier predictions, but Use of Evidence and Intrinsic Motivation were found to be only weakly associated with subject area, although in the expected directions. They were surprised to find large differences between subject areas in the sub-scales of Syllabus-boundedness, Extrinsic Motivation and Disorganised Study Methods. Large differences were also found in Achievement Motivation. Most of these differences conformed with theoretical predictions. However, for some reason, Arts students appeared to have Poor Study Methods. Considerable differences were also evident between individual departments.

In their factor analysis of the CPQ, Entwistle and Ramsden found two main factors: Positive Evaluation of Teaching and courses, and Formal Vocational Teaching. In their factor analysis of the ASI, they found three principal orientations: Meaning, Reproducing, and Achieving/Disorganised and Dilatory. This time they carried out a factor analysis of the two sets of scales together in order to examine the relationships between students' approaches and the context of learning in academic departments. See Fig. 9.5 for the results of this analysis.



Variables	Factors (54% variance explained)					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
<b>Approaches to studying</b>						
Deep Approach	0.71			(0.22)	-0.29	
Relating Ideas	0.67			(0.21)		
Use of Evidence	0.52			0.28	-0.29	0.31
Intrinsic Motivation	0.64			0.39	-0.27	-0.34
Surface Approach			0.61			-0.30
Syllabus-boundedness	-0.38	0.26	0.53			
Fear of Failure			0.58		0.26	
Extrinsic Motivation		0.47	0.37			-0.51
Strategic Approach	0.27				-0.37	-0.26
Disorganised Study Methods					0.54	
Negative Attitudes to Studying	-0.28			-0.32	0.52	
Achievement Motivation					-0.32	
Comprehension Learning	0.60					
Globetrotting					0.44	
Operation Learning			0.56		-0.29	-0.30
Improvidence			0.65			-0.33
<b>Course perceptions</b>						
Formal Teaching Methods		0.75				
Clear Goals and Standards		0.53		0.38	-0.25	
Workload			0.45	(-0.23)		
Vocational Relevance		0.73				
Good Teaching				0.77		
Freedom in Learning		-0.28		0.50		
Openness to Students				0.79		
Social Climate		0.25		0.47		

Most loadings less than 0.25 omitted

No. of respondents = 2208

Fig. 9.5 Factor analysis of Approaches to Studying and Course Perceptions scales  
(Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:185)

They discovered that three factors (numbers I, III and V) were recognisable as the main Studying Orientations and Factors II and IV were recognisable as the Formal Vocational and evaluative dimensions respectively. As for Factor VI, they labelled it as describing confident students with good entry qualifications. The interviews carried out by Entwistle and Ramsden suggested that students responded to the departmental context in which they worked by adopting different levels of approach. Although the factor analysis of the two sets of scales was unable to reveal a lot of overlap, Entwistle and Ramsden were able to make good sense of the analysis in

relation to the interviews. They were able to find the following associations between the two sets of scales (refer to shaded areas of Fig. 9.5):

- the association of the Reproducing Orientation with a heavy Workload (Factor III)
- the association of Disorganised and Dilatory attitudes with perceived Lack of Clarity in Goals (Factor V)
- the association of the Evaluative Factor with Intrinsic Motivation and Use of Evidence in learning (Factor IV)
- the association of Formal-Vocational factor with Extrinsic Motivation (Factor II)

They next attempted to find out to what extent were the approaches to studying factors, and the relationships between the CPQ and the approaches to studying scales, artefacts of area of study differences in the relationship between learning and its context? This was accomplished by carrying out separate factor analyses by subject area (Ramsden and Entwistle, 1981). They found that Meaning Orientation (Factor I) retained its emphasis on Syllabus-freedom and its stylistic component of Comprehension Learning across three subject areas. This approach was described as relating to less Formal Teaching Methods in Science. In Social Science, it was described as related to Freedom in Learning and Good Teaching, and in Arts, to a Good Social Climate and Clear Goals. As for Reproducing Orientation, they found it to be consistently defined in all the subject areas and related to heavy Workload. Factor V, representing a Disorganised and Dilatory Approach to Studying, was found to be associated with the learning pathology of Globetrotting, and, especially in Arts, to Comprehension Learning. They suggested that this meant that Comprehension Learning carried to extreme (and unleavened by Operation Learning) in Arts subjects might lead to Globetrotting. They found similar results in the interviews. On the other hand they found Operation Learning to be associated with Improvidence in all three subject areas equally (Factor III). Factor IV (Departmental Evaluation) was



found to be linked to Positive Attitudes and Meaning Orientation in all three faculties. These results conformed to their interview data.

### 9.3.2 Effects of departmental contexts on student learning

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) next examined the relationships between context and approaches to studying while controlling for the effects of subject areas. Through the interviews conducted earlier they found that Deep Approaches and Favourable Attitudes to Studying were functionally related to students' perceptions of Good Teaching. Besides, unhelpful and Uncommitted Teaching was thought to encourage Poor Attitudes to Studying and Surface Approaches. The interviewees also associated Surface Approaches with perceived deficiencies in the assessment system and with a Lack of Freedom in Learning.

To investigate to what extent the processes identified operate in a large sample of students, they decided to carry out factor analyses. They realised that to present a more convincing explanation of the effects of departmental contexts on student learning, it would be necessary for them to provide a unit of analysis representing departments, rather than individual students. In order to do this, a set of analyses of covariance was performed on the departmental mean values of several subscales, students' pre-entry levels of achievement, and composite variables formed by combining subscales identified in the factor analyses. Through this mean it was predicted that departments which were positively evaluated by their students would:

- a) have higher Meaning Orientation mean scores;
- b) have lower Reproducing Orientation mean scores;
- c) have lower Disorganised and Dilatory mean scores.

than departments which were negatively evaluated.

Based on this composite variables measuring different orientations and evaluations dimensions were formed as follows:

Meaning Orientation	Deep Approach + Relating Ideas + Use of Evidence + Intrinsic Motivation
Reproducing Orientation	Surface Approach + Syllabus-boundedness + Fear of Failure + Improvidence
Disorganised and Dilatory Attitudes	Disorganised Study Methods + Negative Attitudes to Studying + Globetrotting
Evaluation variable 1	Good Teaching + Freedom in Learning
Evaluation variable 2	Freedom in Learning - Workload

The above variables, all of which were measurements of departmental mean scores, were constructed after examining the results of the factor analyses and also took into account the interview findings. A third evaluation variable consisting of Openness to Students + Freedom in Learning + Good Teaching was used in the preliminary analysis but later rejected. This was because Openness to Students was found to be unrelated to any of the criterion variables; it seemed to be a measurement of students' satisfaction with the department but individual differences did not help to explain the quality of their learning. Similar results were reached by multiple discriminant analyses of the departmental mean scores (see Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:188 for details regarding this).

### 9.3.3 Academic progress in different departmental contexts

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) also used the CPQ to analyse interactions between approaches to studying and types of contexts (defined separately from subject areas) in relation to self-rated academic progress. They were interested to find out whether



students with contrasting orientations to studying saw themselves as performing equally well (or equally badly) in departments of different kinds.

In order to examine the effect of different orientations to studying on performance while controlling for discipline, groups of departments were formed in terms of different extreme contexts. This meant that the two departments in each discipline with the highest mean scores on Good Teaching were compared with the two with the lowest mean scores on Good Teaching, and so on. Correlations between self-ratings of performance and the composite variables representing Meaning Orientation, Reproducing Orientation, and Disorganised and Dilatory Approaches were then computed. For the purpose of these analyses, another composite variable, **Accomplished Learning**, was created which was intended to represent more accurately the consistent Deep + Strategic Approach identified in the interviews. It consisted of Meaning Orientation + Strategic Approach + Comprehension Learning + Syllabus-Freedom + Positive Attitudes to Studying.

Entwistle and Ramsden deduced (see Fig. 9.6) that the correlations were suggestive of the interactions between contexts and orientations. They claimed that the correlations revealed that Meaning Orientation could be perceived to be related to academic progress most strongly in a condition of freedom in Learning with Light Workload, and Reproducing Orientation was least penalised when the teaching was poor and there was little freedom in learning. They further inferred that Disorganised and Dilatory approaches, were least effective under the same conditions. As for accomplished learning, they construed that it progressed favourably in all conditions, but particularly so when the teaching was poor and there was freedom in learning.

Conditions (types of departments)	Meaning Orientation	Reproducing Orientation	Disorganised & Dilatory Approach	Accomplished Learning
Highest freedom in learning	0.28	-0.25	-0.40	0.35
Lowest freedom in learning	0.25	-0.23	-0.35	0.29
Highest good teaching	0.23	-0.26	-0.28	0.27
Lowest good teaching	0.30	-0.18	0.42	0.36
Highest freedom in learning and highest good teaching	0.30	0.28	0.37	0.36
Lowest freedom in learning and lowest good teaching	0.26	-0.16	0.47	0.34
Highest workload	0.23	-0.24	-0.43	0.31
Lowest workload	0.26	-0.21	-0.27	-0.32
Highest workload with lowest freedom in learning	0.22	-0.20	-0.39	0.28
Lowest workload with highest freedom in learning	0.32	-0.26	-0.33	0.37

Fig. 9.6 Correlations between orientations to studying and performance under different extreme conditions, controlling for disciplines (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983: 191)

Entwistle and Ramsden further presented descriptions of students they considered representatives of the data. They are:

- consistent deep-level, strategic students perceiving deficiencies in the teaching, and freedom of choice, as challenges to perform better.
- disorganised students hoping that the helpfulness of his lecturers will enable him to progress more effectively.



- Reproducing students responding to a context of restricted choice over method and content of study combined with ineffective teaching and feeling that their method will not be heavily penalised.
- Students orientated towards meaning, feeling themselves least likely to do well when the workload is heavy and there is little freedom in learning.

In conclusion, Entwistle and Ramsden claimed that the results taken in conjunction with the interview findings show students' perceptions of teaching and assessment methods in academic departments are significantly associated with, and probably causally related to, students approaches to studying. Besides, self-rated student performance is related both to perceptions of courses and orientations to learning.

## 9.4 Research Design

### 9.4.1 Scope and the objectives of the study

As discussed earlier, the CPQ was developed by Entwistle and Ramsden to find out the effects of different subject areas and perceived 'quality' of departments or courses on student approaches to studying. In order to investigate this relationship they administered both the ASI and the CPQ to a large population of students of from various disciplines and from various departments. Then, they used factor analyses to determine the associations between orientations to studying and course perceptions.

In the present study the CPQ is also utilised but for a different purpose. In the present study, I am also interested in determining the associations between the orientations to studying and course perceptions but in this case, instead of determining students perceptions of 'quality' of their departmental courses I am

interested in determining **students' perceptions of only their English Proficiency Courses**. Thus, in the present study the subject area is fixed. The learners are the variable factors. They are from the following categories:

- two different modes of studying: distance learning and on-campus learning.
- three different disciplines: Social Science, Applied Science and Business Administration.
- varying Proficiency Levels in English: Low Proficiency level, Average Proficiency level and High Proficiency level.

In view of the different circumstances, the objectives of this study are also different from that of Entwistle and Ramsden's. The study is an attempt to acquire a better understanding of the differences in perceptions of the English Proficiency Courses by distance learners and on-campus learners. It also represents an effort to establish whether there are any associations between approaches to studying and student perceptions of the English Proficiency Courses. The research questions of the study are as follow:

- (1) Are the distance learners' perceptions of the English Language Proficiency Courses different from those of the on-campus learners and if yes, in what ways?
- (2) Are the perceptions of the English Language Proficiency Courses of the following categories of **distance learners** different from each others and if yes, in what ways?
  - (i) Low Proficiency Learners (Lo), Average Proficiency learners (Av), High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (ii) Social Science (Soc.Sc.), Applied Science (Appl. Sc.) and Business Administration (Bus. Adm.) students.



- (3) Are the perceptions of the English Language Proficiency Courses of the following categories of **on-campus learners** different from each others and if yes, in what ways?
- (iii) Low Proficiency Learners (Lo), Average Proficiency learners (Av), High Proficiency (Hi) students.
  - (iv) Social Science (Soc.Sc.), Applied Science (Appl. Sc.) and Business Administration (Bus. Adm.) students.
- (4) Are there any differences between (2) and (3)? If so, what are they?
- (5) Using modes of studying as unit of analysis rather than individual students, what associations between orientations to studying and course perceptions can be identified? In other words, are distance learners' and on-campus learners' perceptions of the English Language Proficiency Courses influenced by their approaches to studying?
- (6) What are the implications of the above findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context?

#### **9.4.2 Rationale for using the Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ) and the interviews**

The CPQ designed by Entwistle and Ramsden was not specifically intended for the purpose of the present study. In fact, so far, I have not come across any study that has utilised the CPQ and the ASI in the same manner as I have done in this study. Why have I decided to use them in such a manner? Besides the most obvious explanation, that is a study of such a nature will break new ground, a more important reason is that by utilising the two instruments in such a manner will enable me to find out whether the ways students approach studying influence their perceptions of

their learning of English as L2. So far, I have not come across any instrument that can help me to establish this link and instead of attempting to devise a new questionnaire, I decided a better method would be to try to modify Entwistle and Ramsden's CPQ to suit my purpose. A thorough examination of the CPQ revealed that only slight modifications were necessary to make it suitable for my purpose (the modifications will be discussed in 9.4.3.2).

Interviews with a selected number of the sample population to elicit their perceptions of the English Proficiency Courses were further carried out and add a more personal dimension and depth to the study.

### 9.4.3 Research instrument

A sub-questionnaire entitled **The New Course Perceptions questionnaire (NCPQ)** was designed for this study. It comprises items taken from Entwistle and Ramsden's CPQ with some modifications made to render it more appropriate for the purpose of this study. The results obtained from the NASI in Study Two were also used in this study in the factor analysis section.

#### 9.4.3.1 New Approaches to Studying Inventory (NASI)

The data of the NASI was used for the factor analysis section. Fig. 8.3 on the meaning of the scales/subscales is presented again for easy reference.



Scale/subscale	Meaning
<b>1. Deep Approach</b> Looking for Meaning Active Interest/Critical Stance Relating and Organising Ideas Use Evidence and Logic	Look for meaning in studying. Active interest in subjects studied. Interact actively with what is being learnt and link what is being studied with real life. Relate new information to previous information actively and organise ideas mentally. Use evidence and logic in trying to understand materials and to arrive at conclusions.
<b>2. Surface Approach</b> Relying on Memorising Difficulty in Making Sense Unrelatedness Concern About Coping	Rely on rote learning. Find difficulty in understanding and making sense of what is being read and things that have to be remembered. Find difficulty in perceiving what is important and also in seeing an overall picture or how ideas fit together. Are unduly concerned over ability to cope with work.
<b>3. Strategic Approach</b> Determination to Excel Effort in Studying Organised Studying Time Management	Are competitive and self-confident and determined to achieve success. Put in extra effort to make sure that work is being done well. Work hard and are able to concentrate well on work. Have organised study methods. Make an effort to ensure that appropriate conditions and materials for study are available. Are able to organise time effectively and able to abide by good study plans.
<b>4. Lack of Direction</b>	Are cynical and disenchanted about higher education. Feel driven to enter university to please others.
<b>5. Academic Self –confidence</b>	Feel confidence about ability to cope with work. Have no difficulty in understanding new information and ideas.
<b>6. Extrinsic Motivation</b>	Are primarily motivated by the qualifications and the prospects of a good job on graduation.
<b>7. Syllabus-boundedness</b>	Have the intention to restrict learning to the defined syllabus and tasks requirements.

Taken from Fig. 8.3. Meaning of the scale/subscales of the NASI. (Ramsden, 1983)

### 9.4.3.2 New Course Perceptions Questionnaire

The CPQ designed by Entwistle and Ramsden comprises 40 self-report items designed to measure students' perceptions of the learning context – the teaching, assessment, and courses – in the academic department that they have undertaken. It consists of the following scales:

1. Good Teaching
2. Freedom in Learning
3. Workload
4. Formal Teaching
5. Clear Goals and Standard
6. Openness to Students
7. Vocational Relevance

Each scale has five items (see Appendix 9A for description of the items in each scale). Students were asked to relate their responses to the Field that they were spending the most time on. Five responses categories were provided for each item. They were:

- 4 -- means Definitely agree
- 3 -- means Agree with reservations
- 1 -- means Disagree with reservations
- 0 -- means Definitely disagree
- 2 -- is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you, or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer.



In the New Course Perceptions Questionnaire (NCPQ) the scales 'Formal Teaching', 'Vocational Relevance' and 'Social Climate' were excluded. Certain questions were modified to make the questionnaire more relevant for the purpose of this study. Irrelevant items were also excluded. An extra scale 'Teaching/Learning Components' was added. (See Appendix 9B for an explanation of the modification made to the CPQ and the reasons for the changes). The scales of the NCPQ and explanation of the meaning of scores for each of the scale is presented in Fig. 9.7

Scale	Meaning of scores
I. Clear Goals and Standard	High scores show that the standards of assessment and the ends of studying are thought to be clearly defined.
II. Workload	High scores show that students feel themselves to be under excessive pressure from the demands of the curriculum and the assessment methods.
III. Good Teaching	High scores mean that students think that staff are well-prepared and confident teachers who helped them with study problems
IV. Freedom in Learning	High scores mean that students think the courses offer a high degree of choice over what is to be studied and how it is to be learnt.
V. Openness to Students	High scores show that staff are thought to be friendly and are prepared to adapt themselves to student needs.
VI. Teaching/Learning Components	High scores mean that the students have a good opinion of the teaching/learning components provided to them.

Fig 9.7 Scales of the NCPQ and explanation of the meaning of scores for each of the scale.

Similar to the NASI, the number of responses to each item was reduced to four completely leaving out 'the item doesn't apply/impossible to give a definite answer' response. However, instead of using the four other responses in the CPQ, I decided to use the four responses from the NASI i.e. '4 for 'strongly agree', 3 'agree', 2 'disagree' and 1 'strongly disagree' to make it consistent with the NASI, and hence, less confusing to the respondents. The questions in NCPQ, like the NASI, were also presented in a random manner. But unlike NASI, the respondents were told to respond to the questionnaire in the **context of learning English**. (See Appendix 6A for a copy of the NCPQ).

#### 9.4.4 Sample population

As the NCPQ was part of the USLPCQ, it was distributed to the same sample population as Study One and Study Two.

#### 9.4.5 Research Procedures

With regard to the NCPQ, the same procedures as in Study One and Study Two were involved. Out of the 750 USPLCQs that were received, it was discovered that the NCPQ section of 35 of them were incomplete. These were discarded. The remaining 715 NCPQs, which included those with missing components (i.e. missing information on year/proficiency level/discipline), were retained. See Fig.9.8 for a breakdown of the number of respondents in the various categories.



Mode	Year	Proficiency level	Discipline				Total
			Soc. Sc.	Appl. Sc.	Bus. Adm.	Missing	
Distance Learners	1	Lo	5	0	10	0	15
		Av	3	2	11	0	16
		Hi	0	0	4	0	4
		Missing	2	1	2	1	6
		Total	10	3	27	1	41
	2	Lo	87	20	46	1	154
		Av	28	18	31	0	77
		Hi	12	7	15	0	34
		Missing	14	9	8	1	32
		Total	141	54	100	2	297
	Missing	Lo	0	0	1	4	5
		Av	0	1	1	0	2
		Hi	0	1	0	0	1
		Missing	0	0	0	1	1
		Total	0	2	2	5	9
On-campus Learners	1	Lo	31	44	46	0	121
		Av	18	57	46	2	123
		Hi	20	35	61	0	116
		Missing	1	5	2	0	8
		Total	70	141	155	2	368
Grand Total							715

Fig. 9.8 Breakdown of the number of respondents in the various categories

9.5 Analysis of Results

The guide for interpreting the mean scores is the same as in Study Two. The mean scores should be interpreted in the following manner:

Mean Score	Meaning
4	Strongly agree
3	Agree
2	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree

### 9.5.1 Item analysis

Since item analysis was carried out on the data of Study One and Study Two, I decided to carry out an item analysis on the data of Study Three as well. As in the case of the previous studies, this item analysis would help me to identify some general trends and to enable a better understanding of how learners from the two different modes responded to each item individually. ANOVA was employed for this purpose. To ensure greater reliability only significant differences in mean scores (i.e.  $p < 0.05$ ) were taken into consideration.



9.5.1.1 Comparison of mean scores across modes

Presentation of results

The mean scores per item of distance learners and on campus learners were compared. The results were significant for the items displayed in Fig. 9.9.

Fig. 9.9 Comparison of mean scores per item of the distance learners and the on-campus learners

SD = Standard Deviation  
\*p<0.05  
\*\* p<0.001  
Underlined scores = higher scores

Scale	Items/questions	Mean scores		SD		F (df)
		DLs	OCLs	DLs	OCLs	
(I)  Clear Goals and  Standard	<b>No. 3</b>  It's always easy to know the standard of work expected of me.	<u>2.93</u>	2.66	0.61	0.69	29.04 (1/692)**
	<b>No. 6</b>  I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what's expected of me in this department.	<u>3.03</u>	2.86	0.63	0.66	11.21 (1/688)**
(II)  Workload	<b>No.14</b>  There 's so much written work to do it's very difficult for me to get down to independent reading.	<u>2.39</u>	2.26	0.68	0.75	6.38 (1/693)*
	<b>No. 23</b>  It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover to many topics.	<u>2.88</u>	2.71	0.71	0.74	9.60 (1/690)*

(IV) Freedom in Learning	No. 8 This department gives us a chance to use methods of study which suit our way of learning.	<u>2.99</u>	2.82	0.66	0.70	10.45 (1/683)**
	No. 21 We have a great deal of choice over how we are going to learn in this department.	<u>2.83</u>	2.73	0.65	0.68	3.942 (1/690)*
(V) Openness to Students	No. 1 Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from us for changes to their teaching methods/materials.	<u>3.14</u>	2.97	0.65	0.72	9.74 (1/676)*
	No. 7 Staff generally consult us before making decisions about how the courses are run.	<u>3.08</u>	2.94	0.66	0.67	7.71 (1/682)*
	No. 12 Most of the teachers here really try hard to get to know us.	<u>3.08</u>	2.96	0.63	0.73	5.69 (1/690)*
(VI) Teaching/ Learning components	No. 13 I utilise the teaching materials (which include text, course guides, study guides, audio and video materials – which ever are relevant) provided by the department extensively.	<u>2.92</u>	2.71	0.68	0.75	14.03 (1/689)**

It was possible to detect some interesting trends from the table. A comparison of mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners revealed that differences in mean scores were significant for 10 items out of a total of 24 items: 2 out of the 4 items were from Clear Goals and Standard, 2 out of 4 items were from Workload, 2 out of 4 were from Freedom in Learning, 3 out of 4 were from Openness to Students and 1 out of 4 was from Teaching/Learning Components. However, none was from Good Teaching. The comparison further revealed that all the significantly higher



mean scores came from the distance learners. This suggested consistency in the data and allowed me to come up with some general postulations.

### ***Discussion of findings***

It is possible to deduce at this juncture that in the learning of English as L2 the distance learners on the whole displayed greater confidence and clarity of goals and standard than the on-campus learners. Their attitudes to the staff and the courses of the English proficiency Department were also more positive than the on-campus learners. It is not surprising to find them expressing satisfaction over a greater degree of freedom in the form of more opportunities to use methods of study that suited them, but it is surprising to find them expressing satisfaction over the staff's openness towards suggestions and eagerness to get to know them. Besides, there seemed to be no difference in the two groups' perceptions of Good Teaching. One would expect on-campus learners who had more contact with the staff to express more positive views towards Openness to Students and Good Teaching. This unexpected turn of event is in a way a good sign as it suggested that the distance learning courses provided by the EPD were generally well-received by the distance learners.

The data also revealed that the distance learners utilised the teaching materials to a greater extent than on-campus learners. This is also not unexpected. Since the distance learners do not have much contact with their tutors, logically they will have to depend on the teaching materials provided to a greater extent than on-campus learners. With regard to workload, it was quite evident that the distance learners found the workload heavier in comparison to the on-campus learners.

The findings clearly suggested that the distance learners' attitudes towards the staff and courses of the English Proficiency department were more positive than the on-campus learner. They did have some problem with workload, but considering that most of them are holding full-time jobs as well, this can be expected.

## 9.5.2 Scale Analysis

### 9.5.2.1 Analysis of reliability of classification of items based on the NCPQ scales

Before attempting an analysis of classification of questions, it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the reliability of the classification of the items according to scales. In this case, it was revealed that the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient for all the scales were below 0.7 suggesting lack of reliability in their classification. However, since this is an exploratory study and considering that each of the scales has only four variables which made it more difficult to obtain reliable results, I decided to include in my analysis all scales with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients of above or almost approaching 0.6. Besides, Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) concluded  $\alpha$  coefficient of above 0.6 is satisfactory. The scales included were Clear Goals and Standard ( $\alpha = 0.64$ ), Good Teaching ( $\alpha = 0.69$ ), Freedom in Learning ( $\alpha = 0.63$ ), Openness to students ( $\alpha = 0.66$ ) and Workload ( $\alpha = 0.58$ ). The scale of Teaching and Learning Components was excluded ( $\alpha = 0.44$ ) as the  $\alpha$  value was too far below the acceptable level.



9.5.2.2 Analysis of perceptions of courses of learners of different modes

Presentation of results

Fig.9.10 gives the mean scores of the distance learners and the on-campus learners for the five selected scales.

Scale	Distance learners		On-campus learners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clear Goals and Standard	3.07	0.43	2.96	0.42
Workload	2.64	0.48	2.56	0.47
Good Teaching	3.08	0.46	3.03	0.41
Freedom in Learning	2.79	0.52	2.69	0.48
Openness to Students	3.06	0.49	2.93	0.47

SD = Standard Deviation

Fig. 9.10 Mean scores of the distance learners and the on-campus learners for the five selected scales

The figure shows that the mean scores for Good Teaching were the highest for both groups of learners, followed by mean scores for Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students for both groups of learners. The mean scores for all three scales were fairly close for both groups of learners (all hovering around 3). The next scale for both groups of learners was Freedom in Learning, with much lower mean scores. The scale with the lowest mean scores for both groups was Workload.

A comparison of mean scores of learners of the two different modes using ANOVA revealed that the mean scores of distance learners were significantly higher for Clear Goals and Standard, Freedom in Learning Openness to Students and Workload [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 12.63(1/693), 6.91(1/693), 14.21(1/693), \text{ and } 5.19(1/693)$  respectively].

### **Discussion of results**

Based on the results, it is possible to say that the general trends with regard to perceptions of the English Language Proficiency Course for both groups of learners were very similar. For both groups, Good Teaching was awarded the highest mean scores, followed by Clear Goals and Standard and Openness to Students. The fact that the mean scores of these three scales hovered around 3 is a positive sign as it suggested approval by both groups of learners towards the staff and courses of the English Language Proficiency Department. A lower mean scores for the fourth scale, Freedom in Learning, suggested less satisfaction with regard to this scale. Although the mean scores for Workload were the lowest, it is still not a positive sign as it above 2.5, suggesting that both groups of learners found heavy workload a problem.

The results from the comparison across modes reiterated those obtained from the Item Analysis. They suggested that the distance learners were more confident and had much clearer perceptions of the goals and standard expected of them. Besides, they had more positive attitudes towards the staff and the way the courses were run. They also indicated that they enjoyed more freedom in learning when compared to the on-campus learners. Their major complaint seemed to be the heavy workload which they found a more serious problem than on-campus learners. As discussed earlier, this is expected since most of them are holding full-time jobs. However, it is not possible to reveal the seriousness of this problem through quantitative analysis. More light on this matter will be shed through the interview data which will be discussed in Chapter 10.



### 9.5.2.3 Analysis of perceptions of courses of learners of different proficiency levels

#### *Presentation of results of distance learners*

Fig.9.11 gives the mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels.

Scale	Lo learners		Av learners		Hi learners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clear Goals and Standard	3.09	0.42	3.05	0.44	2.96	0.39
Workload	2.65	0.49	2.65	0.45	2.65	0.54
Good Teaching	3.10	0.49	3.01	0.43	3.09	0.41
Freedom in Learning	2.85	0.51	2.76	0.51	2.72	0.58
Openness to Students	3.09	0.46	3.00	0.53	3.06	0.50

SD = Standard Deviation

Fig. 9.11 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three proficiency levels

The figure shows that the mean scores for the top three scales i.e. Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students were fairly close for all three proficiency levels (all hovering around 3). The next two scales for all three proficiency levels were Freedom in Learning and Workload.

A comparison of mean scores of the distance learners of the three proficiency levels using ANOVA revealed no significant results.

### **Presentation of results of on-campus learners**

Fig. 9.12 gives the mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three proficiency levels.

Scale	Lo learners		Av learners		Hi learners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clear Goals and Standard	3.06	0.42	2.92	0.40	2.89	0.43
Workload	2.55	0.47	2.62	0.46	2.52	0.48
Good Teaching	3.07	0.44	2.98	0.39	3.04	0.37
Freedom in Learning	2.76	0.42	2.63	0.52	2.67	0.51
Openness to Students	2.93	0.49	2.88	0.46	2.97	0.47

SD = Standard Deviation

Fig. 9.12 Mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three proficiency levels

Similar to distance learners, the mean scores for the top three scales i.e. Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students were also fairly close (all hovering around 3) in the case of the on-campus learners of the three proficiency levels. The next two scales for all three proficiency levels were also Freedom in Learning and Workload.



A comparison of mean scores of on-campus learners across the three proficiency levels using ANOVA revealed significant results for Clear Goals and Standard. The mean score of on-campus learners of Low Proficiency level was significantly higher than that of on-campus learners of Average and High Proficiency levels [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 5.45 (2/256)$ ]

### ***Discussion of results of both distance learners and on-campus learners***

The results indicated that the mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners of the three proficiency levels all hovered around the mean scores of 3.0 for Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students. This suggested that both distance learners and on-campus learners, generally expressed approval towards the staff and the courses of the English Proficiency Department. Lower mean scores for the fourth scale, Freedom in Learning, for all three proficiency levels suggested less approval as far as this scale was concerned. The fact that the mean scores for Workload was above 2.5 suggested that it was perceived as a problem by these learners.

The lack of significant results in the comparison across proficiency levels for distance learners suggested that proficiency levels did not influence perceptions of courses as far as distance learners were concerned. However, in the case of the on-campus learners it was found that the mean scores of Low Proficiency on-campus learners was significantly higher than Average Proficiency and High Proficiency on-campus learners for Clear Goals and Standard. This suggested that Low Proficiency on-campus learners had a clearer understanding of what the English Proficiency Department and the staff expected of them. This is not something that is difficult to understand. Since the Low Proficiency level students undertook very structured courses focusing on the learning of specific grammar items, it is not surprising that these learners knew clearly what the expectations were. In the case of higher level

courses, especially the advanced level courses, the goals were not that clear as abilities to think critically and express opinions and views were expected of them. However, I am surprised that this finding was not evident in the case of distance learners. A possibility is that distance learners are mature learners and so thinking critically, expressing opinion and views are less problematic for them.

#### 9.5.2.4 Analysis of perceptions of courses of learners of different disciplines

##### *Presentation of results of distance learners*

Fig. 9.13 gives the mean scores of distance learners from the three disciplines.

Scale	SocSc Group		ApplSc Group		BusAdm Group	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clear Goals and Standard	3.06	0.43	3.07	0.42	3.08	0.43
Workload	2.62	0.52	2.70	0.48	2.63	0.44
Good Teaching	3.08	0.49	3.15	0.41	3.05	0.46
Freedom in Learning	2.86	0.54	2.77	0.48	2.73	0.53
Openness to Students	3.09	0.51	3.05	0.48	3.05	0.49

SD = Standard Deviation

Fig. 9.13 Mean scores of the distance learners from the three different disciplines

The figure shows that the mean scores for the top three scales i.e. Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students were fairly close for all three disciplines (all hovering around 3). The next two scales for all three disciplines were



Freedom in Learning and Workload. A comparison of mean scores of the distance learners of the three disciplines using ANOVA revealed no significant results.

**Presentation of results of on-campus learners**

Fig. 9.14 gives the mean scores of the distance learners from the three disciplines.

Scale	SocSc Group		ApplSc Group		BusAdm Group	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clear Goals and Standard	2.97	0.44	2.95	0.41	2.96	0.42
Workload	2.48	0.44	2.64	0.49	2.53	0.47
Good Teaching	2.98	0.43	3.05	0.40	3.05	0.40
Freedom in Learning	2.72	0.44	2.65	0.49	2.71	0.49
Openness to Students	2.82	0.53	2.91	0.47	2.99	0.45

SD = Standard Deviation

Fig. 9.14 Mean scores of the on-campus learners from the three different disciplines

Similar to distance learners, the mean scores for the top three scales i.e. Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students were also fairly close (all hovering around 3) in the case of the on-campus learners of the three disciplines. The next two scales for all three disciplines were also Freedom in Learning and Workload.

A comparison of mean scores of on-campus learners across the three disciplines using ANOVA revealed significant results for Openness to Students. The mean score

of on-campus learners from the BusAdm group was significantly higher than that of SocSc group [ $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(df) = 3.28 (2/362)$ ].

### ***Discussion of results of both distance learners and on-campus learners***

The results indicated that the mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners of all disciplines all hovered around the mean scores of 3.0 for Good Teaching, Clear Goals and Standard, and Openness to Students. This suggested that they generally expressed approval towards the English Proficiency Courses, the staff and courses offered. Lower mean scores for the fourth scale, Freedom in Learning, for all three proficiency levels suggested less approval as far as this scale was concerned. The mean scores of above 2.5 for Workload suggested it was perceived as a problem by these learners.

The lack of significant results in the comparison across disciplines for distance learners suggested that disciplines did not influence perceptions of courses as far as distance learners were concerned. In the case of on-campus learners, it was found that the mean score of the BusAdm group was significantly higher than that of SocSc group. It suggests that the BusAdm group is much more contented with the attitude of the staff than the SocSc group. One possible explanation is that the Social Science group were more used to more open attitudes between staff and students in their respective departments, and hence found the attitudes of the English Proficiency Courses staff more constraining in comparison. However, due to the possibilities of other variables coming into play, it is sufficient to say that, generally, disciplines did not seem to influence perceptions of courses with regard to the distance learners but they did (in certain cases) with regard to the on-campus learners. A factor that may contribute to this is the difference in learning context. On-campus learners, studying in normal circumstances, take English courses as well as their departmental courses in normal classroom settings and under normal departmental contexts (see Entwistle



and Ramsden, 1983). Distance learners, on the other hand, are not confined to such learning environment and this may have freed them from the constraints of the various departments. As a result, their perceptions of courses are not influenced by departmental contexts.

### 9.5.3 Factor Analysis

#### 9.5.3.1 Introduction

In their studies, Entwistle and Ramsden carried out two types of factor analysis. First they carried out factor analysis of the CPQ scales to identify the factors in this questionnaire. Then they carried out another on the combined scales/ subscales of ASI and the CPQ in an attempt to examine the relationships between students' approaches to studying and the context of learning in academic departments. They were able to identify two factors from the analysis of the CPQ scales. They described the first factor as representing students' evaluation of teaching and courses, and the second as representing differences between subject areas. Good Teaching, Openness to Students and Freedom in Learning loaded on Factor I, and Formal Teaching Methods, Clear Goals and Standard, High Vocational Relevance. On Factor II. In some studies, they also found that good Social Climate also loaded on Factor II. As for Workload, it only loaded negatively and weakly on Factor I.

From the analysis of the combined ASI and CPQ scale/subscales totals, they were able to find the following associations between the two scales:

- the association of the Reproducing Orientation with a heavy Workload (Factor III)
- the association of Disorganised and Dilatory Attitudes with perceived Lack of Clarity in Goals (Factor V)
- the association of the Evaluative Factor with Intrinsic Motivation and Use of Evidence in Learning (Factor IV)
- the association of Formal-Vocational factor with Extrinsic Motivation (Factor II) (see 9.3.1 for more details)

### 9.5.3.2 Factor Analysis of the NCPQ scales

For this study, I first carried out a factor analysis of the NCPQ scales on the distance learners and the on-campus learners separately to enable a comparison of factors between the two modes of learners. For both sets of factor analyses, principal component factor analyses were performed (with SPSS 9.0 programme) using first varimax ® (orthogonal) rotation with Kaiser normalisation, and then oblimin (oblique) rotation with Kaiser normalisation.

The factor analysis of the NCPQ scales using varimax ® rotation yielded a two-factor solution for both the distance learners and the on-campus learners which accounted for 74.46% of the variance in the case of distance learners, and 66.94% of the variance in the case of on-campus learners. The resulting pattern matrix is presented in Fig. 9.15.



Scale	Factors of Distance learners		Factors of On-campus learners	
	I	II	I	II
Clear Goals and Standard	0.81		0.78	
Workload		1.0		0.98
Good Teaching	0.88		0.85	
Freedom in Learning	0.78		0.70	
Openness to Students	0.88		0.85	
Teaching/Learning Components	0.79		0.67	

Fig 9.15 Factor solutions of the NCPQ scales in the Distance learners and the On-campus learners

The factor solutions from the oblimin rotation were very similar and hence will not be discussed. From the table it can be seen that the factor solutions in both distance learners and on-campus learners were the same. Factor I represented students' evaluation of the teaching and courses, similar to those of Entwistle and Ramsden, except in this case, Clear Goals and Standard, and Teaching and Learning Components (a new scale) also loaded on it. Factor II had only one scale i.e. Workload which appeared to represent students' dissatisfaction with the teaching and courses. The factor solutions identified were not very helpful as they did not enable a better understanding of the associations between the various scales and the various items in the scales. In view of that I decided to further carry out a factor analysis of the NCPQ items.

### 9.5.3.3 Factor Analysis of the NCPQ items

The factor analysis of the NCPQ items using varimax rotation ® rotation yielded a five- factor solution for the distance learners which accounted for 56.32% of the variance and a seven-factor solution for the on-campus learners which accounted for 56.80% of the variance. A careful examination of the factors suggested that the last factor in the case of distance learners and the last three factors in the case of on-campus learners should be eliminated as the scree tests revealed a levelling off with lower components after the fourth factor in both cases. Principal factor analyses using varimax ® rotation were performed again. This time the factors to be extracted were limited to four in both cases. The four-factor solution for distance learners accounted for 52.04% of the variance and the four-factor solution for on-campus learners accounted for 43.14% of the variance. (See Fig.9.16 and 9.17 for % variance accounted for by each factor).

The resulting pattern factor matrix revealed that most of the items that loaded highly on Factor I of the distance learners also loaded highly on Factor II of the on-campus learners for all factors (except for items in the Teaching/Learning components scale) and vice versa. Fig. 9.16 presents a comparison of the items that loaded on these factors except for Teaching/Learning Components as it did not fit into the pattern.



Fig. 9.16 Comparison of the NCPQ items that loaded on Factor I and Factor II of the Distance learners and the On-campus learners

- 0.77 Items that have high loadings on Factor I of the distance learners and Factor II of the on-campus learners
- 0.66 Items that have high loadings on Factor I of the distance learners only
- 0.88 Items that have high loadings on Factor II of the distance learners and Factor I of the on-campus learners
- 0.33 Deletion of weak loadings

	Factor I of Distance learners	Factor II of On- campus learners	Factor II of Distance learners	Factor I of On- campus learners
Percentage of variance accounted for by this factor	20.97	12.46	16.68	14.73
Clear Goals and Standard				
3. It's always easy to know the standard of work expected of me.			0.44	0.41
6. I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what's expected of me in this department.	0.37		0.58	0.72
15. Teachers here usually tell us exactly what we are supposed to be learning.	0.76	0.36		0.32
22. Teachers here generally make it clear from the start what will be required of us.	0.75	0.32		

<b>Good Teaching</b>				
5. The teachers in this department always seem ready to give their help and advice on approaches to studying.	0.39		0.65	0.64
11. Teachers in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching /materials at the right level for us.	0.62	0.58		
18. Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching /materials very thoroughly.	0.67	0.52		
24. Staff here makes a real effort to understand difficulties we may be having with our work.	0.66	0.56		
<b>Freedom in Learning</b>				
4. We seem to be given a lot of choice in the work we have to do.			0.71	0.51
8. This department gives us a chance to use methods of study which suit our own way of learning.	0.35		0.69	0.54
17. There is a real opportunity in this department for us to choose the particular areas we want to study.	0.38	0.38	0.36	
21. We have a great deal of choice over how we are going to learn in this department.	0.52	0.56	0.37	



Openness to Students				
1. Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from us for changes to their teaching methods/materials.			0.68	0.61
7. Staff generally consult us before making decisions about how the courses are run.	0.38		0.73	0.67
12. Most of the teachers here really try hard to get to know us.	0.66	0.38	0.39	
19. Teachers in this department generally take our ideas and interests seriously.	0.65	0.67		0.32

A careful examination of Factor I of the distance learners and Factor II of the on-campus learners revealed that all of the items (except for item no. 21) that loaded highly on both these factors were teacher-centred. These factors can be described as representing students' evaluation of the extent the teachers were successful in improving their teaching and the courses. This pattern seemed to be more distinct in distance learners as the percentage of variance accounted for was higher in the distance learners. Besides, Factor I of the distance learners had three additional items (displaying 'teacher-centred characteristics' i.e. items nos. 15, 22 and 12) loading highly on it. In my opinion, it is appropriate to call factors that loaded highly on both these factors as common factor 1: Teacher-centred evaluation of teaching and courses.

On the other hand, all the items (except for item 5) of Factor II of the distance learners and Factor I of the on-campus learners were **learner-centred**. These factors can be described as representing students' evaluations of how successful they personally were in adapting to the teaching. It includes students' perceptions of their own independence as learners. I had named these as Common Factor II: Learner-centred evaluation of teaching and courses. These findings are very enlightening as they offer a deeper insight into students' evaluation of teaching and courses. They pointed to the existence of two patterns of evaluations one, focusing on the teacher and the other on the learners. These patterns were present in both the distance learners and on-campus learners. The results further suggested generally that Common Factor I was more distinct in distance learners than in the on-campus learners.

With regard to Factor III and IV, the pattern factor matrix revealed that most of the items that loaded highly on Factor III of the distance learners also loaded highly on Factor IV of the on-campus learners for all factors and vice versa. Fig.9.17 presents the items that loaded on these factors.



Items	Factor III of Distance learners	Factor IV of On- campus learners	Factor IV of Distance learners	Factor III of On-campus learners
Percentage of variance accounted for by this factor	8.22	7.96	6.17	7.99
<b>Workload</b>				
2. There's a lot of pressure on me as a student.	0.58	0.34	0.48	0.38
9. The workload is too heavy.	0.74	0.72		
14. There's so much written work to do it's very difficult for me to get down to independent reading.	0.75	0.77		
23. It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too many topics.	0.54	0.56		
<b>Teaching /learning Components</b>				
10. The teaching/learning components offered by this department are sufficient for my purpose.			-0.48	
16. A greater variety of teaching /learning components should be provided.			0.71	0.76
20. The teaching/learning components are very helpful.				0.68

0.56 Items that have high loadings on Factor III of distance learners and Factor IV of on-campus learners

0.76 Items that have high loadings on Factor IV of distance learners and Factor III of on-campus learners

Fig. 9.17 Comparison of the NCPQ items that loaded on Factor III and IV of the distance learners and on-campus learners

Factor III of the distance learners and Factor IV of the on-campus learners can be described as representing students' dissatisfaction with the teaching and courses. As for Factor IV of the distance learners and Factor III of the on-campus learners, they seem to represent a desire for more teaching/learning components. There also seems to be an association of pressure/anxiety (item 2) with a desire for teaching/learning components. However, since these factors accounted for only small percentages of the variance, they are patterns evident only in a small proportion of learners and thus unimportant factors.

On discovering common Factor I and common Factor II, I decided to probe deeper by carrying out mean scores comparison between modes of the items in these two factors. (See Fig.9.18 for coherent lists of the items that loaded 0.4 or higher on these factors).

	Common Factor I		Common Factor II	
	Distance learners	On-campus learners	Distance learners	On-campus learners
<b>Good Teaching</b>				
21. Teachers in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching /materials at the right level for us.	0.62	0.58		
18. Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching /materials very thoroughly.	0.67	0.52		
24. Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties we may be having with our work.	0.66	0.56		
<b>Openness to Students</b>				
19. Teachers in this department generally take our ideas and interests seriously.	0.65	0.67		



<b>Clear Goals and Standard</b>				
3.	It's always easy to know the standard of work expected of me.		0.44	0.41
6.	I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what's expected of me in this department.		0.58	0.72
<b>Freedom in Learning</b>				
4.	We seem to be given a lot of choice in the work we have to do.		0.71	0.51
8.	This department gives us a chance to use methods of study which suit our own way of learning.		0.69	0.54
<b>Openness to Students</b>				
1.	Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from us for changes to their teaching methods/materials.		0.68	0.61
7.	Staff generally consult us before making decisions about how the courses are run.		0.73	0.67

Fig.9.18 Coherent and significant loadings of Common Factor I and Common Factor II

Before carrying out the mean scores comparison, I carried out an analysis of the reliability of the classification of the items in these two factors. It was revealed that the Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient was 0.71 for Common Factor I and 0.75 for Common Factor II suggesting reliability in their classification. This further encourages me to carry out the mean scores comparison. Fig.9.19 presents a comparison of mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners for Common Factor I and Common Factor II.

Scale	Mean scores		Standard Deviation		F(df)
	Distance learners	On-campus learners	Distance learners	On-campus learners	
Common Factor I	3.01	2.96	0.49	0.42	1.91(1/693)
Common Factor II	2.97	2.81	0.47	0.46	22.04(1/693)**

\*p<0.05

\*\*p<0.001

Fig. 9.19 Comparison of mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners for Common Factor I and Common Factor II

The figure shows that the mean scores for Common Factor I is higher for both distance learners and on-campus learners than the mean scores for Common Factor II suggesting that in their evaluations of teaching and courses generally they gave higher scores to the teacher-centred items than learner-centred items. This seems to indicate that the learners have a higher opinion of the teachers' capabilities in teaching and preparing courses than in their own abilities in coping with the courses.

A comparison of mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners for each factor revealed significant result for Common Factor II. The mean score of distance learners for Common Factor II was significantly higher that of on-campus learners. This suggests that generally distance learners gave higher scores to learner-centred items than on-campus learners. This suggests that the distance learners are more confident in their own abilities to cope with the courses than on-campus learners.



### 9.5.3.4 Factor Analysis of the combined ASI scales/subscales and the NCPQ scales

The factor analysis of the ASI and the NCPQ scales using the varimax rotation yielded a four-factor solution for the distance learners and a five-factor solution for the on-campus learners. The four-factor solution for distance learners accounted for 58.56% of the variance, and the five-factor solution for on-campus learners accounted for 57.70% of the variance. A thorough examination of the factors suggested that the last factor in the case of on-campus learners should be eliminated as the scree test revealed a levelling off with lower components after the fourth factor. Principal components analysis was performed again using varimax ® rotation but this time the factors were limited to four in both cases. The new four-factor solutions in the case of on-campus learners accounted for 52.93% of the variance. Fig. 9.20 presents the resulting pattern matrix including the variance accounted for by each factor.

Scale/subscales	Factors of Distance learners				Factors of On-campus learners			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
<b>Percentage of variance accounted for by each factor</b>	<b>23.64</b>	<b>16.30</b>	<b>10.53</b>	<b>8.09</b>	<b>20.42</b>	<b>14.40</b>	<b>12.18</b>	<b>5.93</b>
<b>Deep Approach</b>								
1. Looking for meaning	0.74				0.74			
2. Active interest/critical stance	0.67				0.40			0.57
3. Relating and organising ideas	0.66	0.32			0.60	0.34		
4. Use evidence and logic	0.80				0.71			

<b>Surface Approach</b>								
1. Relying on memorising	0.47		0.39		0.31		0.54	
2. Difficulty in making sense			0.37	0.67			0.63	
3. Unrelatedness			0.64				0.78	
4. Concern about coping			0.77				0.66	
<b>Strategic Approach</b>								
1. Determination to excel	0.72				0.73			
2. Effort in studying	0.81				0.77			0.38
3. Organised studying	0.69				0.60			0.72
4. Time management	0.64				0.61			0.70
Lack Of Direction				0.66	-0.34		0.35	0.56
Extrinsic Motivation				0.65			0.44	0.50
Academic Self-confidence	0.54		-0.45	0.35	0.55			0.34
Syllabus-boundedness	0.44		0.47		0.41		0.48	
Clear Goals and Standard	0.36	0.73			0.43	0.66		
Workload			0.61				0.51	
Good Teaching		0.87				0.86		
Freedom in Learning		0.80				0.67		
Openness to Students		0.86				0.86		
Teaching/Learning Components		0.73				0.59		

Fig.9.20 Factor solutions of the combined ASI and NCPQ scales in Distance Learners and On-campus learners



The factor solutions from the oblimin rotation was also very similar and hence will not be discussed. It is possible to make the following associations between the combined ASI and NCPQ scales/subscales:

- **The association of Clear Goals and Standard with positive approaches to studying**

Clear Goals and Standard were associated with Deep Approach, Strategic Approach and Academic Self-confidence in Factor I of distance learners and with Deep Approach, Strategic Approach, Academic Self-confidence and no problem with Lack of Direction in Factor I of on-campus learners (shaded 0.36 in Fig.9.20).

- **The association of positive evaluation of teaching and courses with a positive approach to studying**

Positive evaluation of teaching and courses were associated with Relating and Organising Ideas in Factor II of distance learners and Factor II of on-campus learners (shaded 0.51 in Fig. 9.20)

- **The association of negative approaches to studying with heavy Workload**

Surface Approach, and Lack of Academic Self-confidence in Factor III of distance learners and Surface Approach and Lack of Direction in Factor III of on-campus learners were associated with a heavy Workload (shaded 0.70 in Fig. 9.20)

**The association of Clear Goals and Standard with ambivalent approaches to studying**

Clear Goals and Standard was associated with Relying on Memorising and Syllabus-boundedness in Factor I of distance learners and Factor I of on-campus learners.

- **The association of heavy Workload with ambivalent approaches to studying**  
Heavy Workload was associated with Syllabus-boundedness in Factor III of the distance learners and with Extrinsic Motivation and Syllabus-boundedness in Factor III of the on-campus learners.

The basic pattern that can be observed from the associations bears some striking resemblance to that of Entwistle and Ramsden. There is evidence of some positive approaches to studying being associated with some positive evaluations of teaching and courses and some negative approaches to studying being associated with some negative evaluations of teaching and courses. From these findings it is possible to deduce that learners' approaches to studying affect their perceptions of the teaching and learning of not only content courses but also language courses. This pattern is evident not only on-campus learners but also distance learners. In fact the associations are almost identical in both groups of learners except for some minor differences.

As for the differences, as far as I can see the only difference worth considering is the association of heavy Workload with Extrinsic Motivation in on-campus learners and not in distance learners. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, literature has revealed that it is incorrect to view Extrinsic Motivation solely in a negative light (Kembar, 2000). However, it is I think reasonable to assume that Extrinsic Motivation is negative in this instance, since it is associated with heavy Workload. I believe the same rationale can be applied to the other two ambivalent approaches to studying i.e. Relying on Memorising and Syllabus-bounded. It should be considered positive when it is associated with positive evaluation of teaching and courses and negative when associated with negative evaluation of teaching and courses. Thus, Relying on Memorising and Syllabus-boundedness should be considered positive when associated with Clear Goals and Standard and Syllabus-boundedness should be considered negative when associated with Workload. The discovery of the association of positive and negative evaluations of teaching and courses with Relying



on Memorising, Syllabus-boundedness and Extrinsic Motivation further strengthened the belief that these approaches are ambivalent in nature.

#### **9.5.4 Summary of results obtained from analyses of the NCPQs**

The results indicated a general trend with regard to perceptions of English Proficiency Courses. Generally, both the distance learners and the on-campus learners showed approval towards the staff and courses of the English Proficiency Department, appeared less satisfied with the degree of freedom given and perceived heavy workload as a problem. This pattern was evident in all cases, despite differences in modes, proficiency levels and disciplines.

The results from the comparison across modes reiterated those obtained from the item analysis. They suggested that distance learners on the whole were more confident, had much clearer perceptions of the goals and standard expected of them, and had more positive attitudes of the staff and courses of the EPD than on-campus learners. They also indicated that they enjoyed more freedom in learning and were able to utilise the teaching materials to a greater extent than on-campus learners. Since they are distance learners it is not surprising that they are more dependent on the teaching materials provided. Besides, the finding suggested that they had more problem with heavy workload than on-campus learners. I attribute this to the fact that they are adult learners with full-time jobs.

The results obtained from comparison of mean scores across proficiency levels suggested that proficiency levels seemed not to influence distance learners' perceptions of courses. However, this was not in the case with the on-campus. It appeared that the Low Proficiency on-campus learners had a clearer understanding of what the English Proficiency Department and the staff expected of them than the other proficiency levels. This is possibly due to the structured nature of the courses

they are taking, unlike the more advance courses which require more advanced skills like critical thinking. The reason why this finding is not evident in distance learners may be because the distance learners are mature learners and can think more critically and are able to expressing their opinion and views better in advance level courses.

Similarly, the results obtained from the comparison of mean scores across disciplines for distance learners were not significant. This suggested the lack of influence of disciplines on perceptions of courses. However, in the case of on-campus learners, it appeared that the BusAdm group was much more contented with the attitude of the staff than the SocSc group. One possible explanation is that the SocSc group found the attitudes of the English Proficiency Courses staff more constraining because they were use to more open attitudes in their respective departments in comparison. However, due to the possibilities of other variables coming into play, it is sufficient to say that generally, disciplines seemed not to influence distance learners' perceptions of courses but they did (in certain cases) with regard to on-campus learners. A contributory factor may be the difference in learning context.

Factor analysis of the NCPQ items was able to identified two distinctive factors in the distance learners and the on-campus learners: (a) Common Factor I: Teacher-centred evaluation of teaching and courses which represents students' evaluations of how successful the teachers are in improving their teaching and the courses and (b) Common Factor II: Student-centred evaluation of teaching and courses which represents students evaluations of how successful they are in adapting to the teaching including their perceptions of their own independence as learners. These patterns seemed more distinct in distance learners. Two other factors identified in both groups of learners were: students' dissatisfaction with the teaching and courses, and students under pressure desiring more teaching/learning components. These two factors were less important as they accounted for only small percentages of the variance.



A comparison of mean scores of distance learners and on-campus learners suggested that learners had a higher opinion of their teachers' capabilities in teaching and preparing courses than in their own abilities in coping with the courses. Besides, they suggested that distance learners were more confident of their own abilities to cope with the courses than on-campus learners. These findings support those of the item analysis and scale analysis.

Through a factor analysis of the combined ASI scales/subscales and the NCPQ scales, a basic pattern associating positive approaches to studying with positive evaluations of teaching and courses and negative approaches with negative evaluations was discovered. This suggested that learning approaches to studying in general affected learners' perceptions of the teaching and learning of not only content courses but also language courses. This pattern was found in both the distance learners and the on-campus learners suggesting that this pattern was not unduly influenced by mode of learning.

The discovery of the associations of Relying on Memorising, Syllabus-boundedness and Extrinsic Motivation with positive and negative evaluations of teaching and courses further strengthened the belief that these approaches were ambivalent in nature. Thus, it would be reasonable to consider Relying on Memorising and Syllabus-boundedness as positive when associated with Clear Goals and Standard, and Syllabus-boundedness and Extrinsic Motivation as negative when associated with Workload.

These findings are enlightening and have serious implications to the teaching and learning of English in an L2 distance learning context. However, the implications of these findings cannot be discussed without considering the findings of the

interviews. Thus, it is more appropriate to discuss them at the end of the next chapter, together with the implications of the findings of the interviews.



## CHAPTER 10

### Study Three

# Perceptions of English Proficiency Courses: Focusing on the interviews

## 10.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the results of the NCPQ were analysed and discussed. In this chapter, I will discuss the results of the interviews. The data from the interviews will be explored in two ways. First, I will use the results obtained from the analyses of the NCPQs to derive themes that act as the framework to examine the interviews. It is necessary to point out here that it is not possible to map out the actual questions asked onto these themes, as the interview guide was designed before the analysis of the NCPQ data. Thus, what I intend to do, is to examine the data of the interviews in detail to look for evidence to enhance the data from the NCPQ. Second, the interviews will be explored for further themes that will enable me to gain a deeper insight into the interviewees' beliefs about the learning of English. The interviewees were all distance learners, thus, no comparisons between modes will be involved.

The chapter will begin with a description of the research design and then proceed to an analysis of the results in the above-mentioned manner. Finally, the chapter will

discuss the implication of the findings of the NCPQ and the interviews to the teaching and learning of English as L2.

## 10.2 Research design

### 10.2.1 Research Instrument

According to Patton (1987), there are three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through in-depth, open-ended interviews. The three approaches involve different types of preparation, conceptualization, and instrumentation. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses and each serves a somewhat different purpose. The three choices are: (1) the informal conversational interview; (2) the general interview guide approach; and (3) the standardized open-ended interview. The difference among these three approaches is the extent to which interview questions are determined, and standardised before the interview occurs.

In this study I decided to use the general interview guide approach. I was not in favour of the informal interview, as it relies too much on 'spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction' (Patton, 1987:110), and does not allow the interviewer the opportunity to consistently ask specific questions. The standardised open-ended interview, on the other hand, is too rigid as it does not allow any free interaction as indicated below:

It consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of taking each respondent through the same sequence, and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words.

Patton (1987:112)



Hence, an interview guide with a list of questions or issues to be explored in the course of interview would be most suitable. This would ensure that each participant would have the opportunity to give his/her opinions on issues delineated by the interviewer. It would further serve as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. It would also help the interviewer to plan ahead on how best to utilise the limited time available in an interview situation. In a nutshell, it would keep an interaction focused, and at the same time allow individual perspectives and experience to emerge.

My interview guide was designed to get feedback from the Distance Learners on the English Proficiency Courses they were taking. It was divided into the following seven sections:

Section I: Opening Questions

Section II: Introductory Questions

Section III: Transition Questions

Section IV: Key Questions

Section V: Ending Questions

Section I and II were the 'warming-up' section designed to put the interviewees at ease. Section III, consisted of general questions related to the programme designed to lead the interviewees to the key questions in Section IV. There were altogether four key questions. The first three questions focused on the following three main aspects of the programmes:

Administration/running of the course

Support system provided to the Distance Learners

Distance Learners' personal needs

The fourth question was an 'open question'. Interviewees were asked to suggest issues related to the programme that they felt should be discussed. For each key question, some follow-up questions were offered. These questions would only be brought up if the interviewees failed to cover a particular area, or to clarify certain points brought up by them. Section V comprised only one question designed to 'round up' the discussion by asking the interviewees to suggest which issue they considered to be most in need of attention. For more details refer to Appendix 10A for the Interview Guide.

### 10.2.2 Sample population

The individual interviews were conducted with 13 second-year distance learning students from UKM. All of them had completed one English Proficiency Course. I decided to interview only distance learners because the focus of this thesis is on the learning needs of the distance learners. Besides, I felt that sufficient comparisons had been made through the NCPQs, and what was required at this stage was more evidence to support what had been discovered about the distance learners and not more comparisons. A more pragmatic reason was that the interviews involved only a small number of students, insufficient for any reliable comparisons. The interviewees were all from Klang Valley (i.e., Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas), thus, they cannot be considered to be representatives of all distance learners, but rather representatives of distance learners from the urban areas.

The interviews were conducted a few weeks after they had completed their final examination for the second semester of their second year. The students were selected at random. Fig.10.1 presents a breakdown of the distance learners who took part in the individual interviews. Some background information on the students is also provided.



Student	Gender	Profession	Proficiency level	Discipline	Type of English Course taken
A	Female	teacher	Low	SocSc	VG 1023
B	Female	teacher		SocSc	
C	Male	teacher		ApplSc	
D	Female	bank clerk		BusAdm	
E	Male	teacher	Average	SocSc	VG1033
F	Male	teacher		SocSc	
G	Male	teacher		ApplSc	
H	Female	teacher		BusAdm	
I	Female	teacher		BusAdm	
J	Male	teacher	High	SocSc	VG 2003 or VG 2013 or VG 2023
K	Male	teacher		ApplSc	
L	Female	teacher		BusAdm	
M	Female	finance clerk		BusAdm	

SocSc = Social Science

ApplSc = Applied Science

BusAdm = Business Administration

Fig. 10.1 Breakdown of the distance learners who took part in the individual interviews.

### **10.2.3 Research Procedures**

The interviews were conducted over a period of one month. Distance learners that met the criteria were randomly phoned to inquire whether they would be willing to participate in the interviews. Appointments were made with those who were willing. Most of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' place of work. The interviews took about one to one-and-a half hours. The questions were asked in English, but students were allowed to respond in either English or Malay. Most of the Low Proficiency students switched from English to Malay frequently. They normally switched to Malay to illustrate a point, or to elaborate an issue. Average Proficiency students tended to use English, but occasionally reverted to Malay, except for one student who used only Malay. High Proficiency learners used only English. The interviews were recorded on tapes, transcribed verbatim, and analysed.

## **10.3 Analysis of the interviews**

### **10.3.1 Analysis of interviews according to themes**

As mentioned earlier, the results obtained from the analyses of the NCPQs were used to derive themes that would act as the framework to examine the interviews. The common themes are listed in Fig.10.2.



No.	Theme
1	Distance learners indicated approval of the staff and courses of the English Proficiency Department.
2	Distance learners enjoyed the freedom given in the learning of English.
3	Heavy workload was a serious problem with distance learners.
4	Distance learners were confident and had a clear perceptions of the goals and standard expected of them.
5	They depended to a large extent on the teaching materials.
6	Proficiency levels did not influence their perceptions of courses.
7	Disciplines did not influence their perceptions of courses.
8	Distance learners had a higher opinion of their teachers' capabilities in meeting their needs than in their own abilities in coping with the courses.
9	Distance learners' approaches to studying in general affected their perceptions of the teaching and learning of learning English as L2.
10	Relying on memorising, Syllabus-boundedness, and Extrinsic Motivation were associated with positive and negative evaluations of teaching and courses.

Fig. 10.2 Common themes identified from the analyses of the NCPQs

**Theme 1**

**Distance learners indicated approval of the staff and courses of the English Proficiency Department.**

The interview results supported this theme. They revealed that a majority of the interviewees had a favourable opinion of their English Language instructors, in spite of the fact that they only had two tutorial sessions per semester, once towards the fifth week of the semester and another towards the tenth week. Each tutorial session was from 8 am to 6pm (with a lunch break of two hours from 12pm to 2pm). The analysis of the responses of the thirteen interviewees revealed that eight of them spoke enthusiastically of their English Language instructors (whom they frequently referred to as 'lecturers'):

Lecturers' English very good. They come on time. There is a support system. Two assignments, one writing task and one project. Lecturer gives back the next writing task the next meeting. We know our mistakes we can improve our English.

(Student B: Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

Our English teacher very good. She encourages us to speak to our friends in English. Style of teaching also very good. Can provide good climate for teaching.

(Student C: Male, Low Proficiency, ApplSc)

One praised the friendly environment as well:

Interesting. It helps us. A friendly type of environment. Not so serious. Not formal. Unlike other courses (in other departments). We feel like enjoying ourselves.

(Student E: Male, Average Proficiency, SocSc)



As for the other five students, Student G (Female, Average Proficiency, BusAdm) was fairly satisfied. Her only complaint was that her English instructor did not provide her with sufficient guidelines and instructions. Student H (Female, Average Proficiency, BusAdm) was unhappy that the “lecturers do not teach them the basics”, but admitted that “with such a short time also cannot teach much”. Two were non-committal. Only one student was exceptionally negative about the staff. He complained that, “Instructors not good. All this year no good instructors. We learn all by ourselves”. (Student F: Male, Average Proficiency, ApplSc). But he acknowledged he did get some help from them.

With regard to the courses offered by the English Proficiency Department, all except one interviewee appeared quite satisfied with the courses in general, considering them to be useful and beneficial, but were unhappy with the modules in their study guides. (See Appendix 10B for a sample lesson from a Study Guide). Only two students found the modules useful. Student C (Male, Low Proficiency, ApplSc), because “the modules are according to skills”, and Student J (Male, High Proficiency, ApplSc), because the module for Writing Skills “prepares a person to start in the future to write thesis, footnotes etc”. The rest of the students complained about the modules, not because they found the materials irrelevant for improving their English, but because they were too busy and did not have time to go through the thick modules, and because what they studied from the modules were not directly related to the examinations:

Modules? I never use – useless. Nothing I can get. During exams – *tak ada kaitan* dengan (no connections with) modules. Only *buku teks ada kaitan* (the textbooks have connections). We don't have time to refer modules, better to refer to textbook. Most of my friends say you *bagi us modules lebih baik beli us textbooks* (give us modules you better buy the textbooks for us).

(Student A: Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

(Modules for English) too thick. Actually lecturer also only use Headway. I listen to tips from lecturers, study this study that. *Kita belajar untuk peperiksaan* (We study for exams). Not enough time.

(Student B: Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

Psychology and communication questions based on modules. English modules only to brush up English okay-lah.

(Student E: Male, Average Proficiency, SocSc)

Modules? Lecturers should consult students in writing modules. Modules should be combined with textbooks. No time to refer to the modules. Only go to textbooks, during last week before the exams.

(Student I: Male, High Proficiency, SocSc)

Modules useless. Because I don't like the presentation. I prefer the coursebook 'Headway'. I go straight to Headway, grammar book and check computer. I made my own notes. I only study for exams. maybe that is the weakness of the Malaysian Education System.

(Student F: Male, Average Proficiency, ApplSc)

However, all the students used the modules of their departmental courses which comprised mainly content courses diligently. They found these modules useful as examination questions were based on them, unlike English, where examinations were based on the format of the Course textbook.

## Theme 2

**Distance learners enjoyed the freedom given in the learning of English.**

This theme was not that evident in the interviews. Although all interviewees expressed satisfaction in being given an opportunity to study through the distance learning mode, none of them explicitly mentioned that they enjoyed learning English through this mode. In fact, only three students stated that enough guidance had been given. The rest requested for more support or guidance, in one form or another.



Seven explicitly asked for more tutorials. The three who did not want more tutorials admitted that tutorials were beneficial, but said they had no time to attend and asked for alternatives forms of guidance, such as more project work and more teacher-marked assignments. Two students even wanted easier access to the instructors. Another two went so far as to suggest that intensive courses, instead of the present English Proficiency Courses, be offered.

### Theme 3

**Heavy workload was a serious problem with distance learners.**

Only Student I (Male, High Proficiency, SocSc) specifically complained about being given too many assignments. The recurring complaint in all the interviews was a lack of time to study and to practise English. None appeared to follow the guidelines given by the English Proficiency Department with regard to the number of hours they should spend on each unit (see Appendix 10C for a sample of this type of guideline) Instead, all students, except one, studied English at the last minute (i.e., close to the examination period). As for their departmental courses, ten out of thirteen of them mainly studied at the last minute, but the rest of them did prepare notes on a regular basis, which none of them did for English. Heavy workload, as seen from these interviewees' perspectives, seemed to refer not only to coursework, but to encompass work, and family commitments and responsibilities, resulting in many of them studying at the last minute, as seen in the examples below:

Quite difficult when we want to ulangkaji (revise) pelajaran (coursework). As a teacher, housewife, kadang-kadang mesti pilih masa sesuai untuk belajar (Sometimes must choose an appropriate time to study). Bukan (Not) everyday I can take a book and read.

(Student B, Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

I have a husband, two children working also. So many things I have to do at the same time, especially if we have an exam. So difficult. At home I cannot study. Only at exam time-lah. Even I cannot hold a book. My children one and a half years old and two and a half years old. Also always quarrelling.

(Student D, Female, Low Proficiency, BusAdm)

Three, however, admitted that as teachers they were better of than those working in the private sector as they only work half a day. Besides, they did not work on Saturdays and Sundays, and had long school holidays.

#### Theme 4

**Distance learners were confident and have a clear perception of the goals and standard expected of them.**

Nine interviewees expressed desire for more tutorials and other means of support as indicated in the examples that follows. All these were students of Average Proficiency or Low Proficiency except for one. They did not appear very confident as far as learning of English was concerned. They expressed no clear perceptions of goals and standard expected of them. They also felt that their English had not improved much. Among these students, one was from the High Proficiency level group. The other three students from the High Proficiency level group appeared more confident and seemed to have a better idea of what was expected of them. The remaining student, Student D (of Low Proficiency level group), had no complaints because she was taking a course that was too easy for her. She admitted that she deliberately under-performed for the English Proficiency Exam, so that she could be placed at a much easier level.

English courses useful but English has not improved after following the courses because lectures only twice per semester.....

(Student A, Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)



English interesting, tak cukup masa (not enough time). Kita ambil tutorial satu kali mid-sem dan satu kali akhir (We take tutorial once, during mid-semester and once, end of semester).....

I think it is beneficial. Helpful. Improve my English a bit.....

For 1013 and 1023, I learned what I already know. 1033, I learn more.

(Student B, Female, Low Proficiency, ApplSc)

I think I start at what level. I still in that level. If you have time you can improve yourself. But I have not studied so I think my level is the same.

Tutorials? The lecturers do not teach us the basics. But with such a short time also cannot teach much. Must have more tutorials.

(Student H, Female, Average Proficiency, BusAdm)

Not enough time. Too many tasks to finish in one meeting. Some tutors do not give enough guidelines. No clear instructions.

Help me to brush up my English but better to apply for one year intensive course.

(Student I, Male, Average Proficiency, SocSc)

The English course is very ideal but I don't have time to study. We have to use it but I don't have time.

We should get more tutorials. Intensive course in the summer break is the best because the semester break is too long. Nothing to do. All Sundays during Semester break should be English.

My English is not good and cannot improve in a short time. But every semester our English programme is more difficult and if we have to improve to that level. Very difficult.

(Student K, Male, High Proficiency, BusAdm)

**Theme 5**

**They depended to a large extent on the teaching materials.**

This interview data clearly supported this theme. However, the interviewees relied not so much on the modules, but on the textbooks. They hardly referred to materials outside the textbooks. The main reason for this was because they perceived the modules as being 'useless', as they were not directly related to the examinations.

All students indicated some awareness of the usefulness of involvement in activities, such as reading English newspapers and magazines, watching English programmes on television, listening to the radio and English tapes to improve their English, but complained that they did not have the time to do so. As one student put it:

No time to refer to modules. Only go to the textbook during last week before exams. Audio-visual aids useful but should be given in classes. No time to do it at home.....

Sometimes, read newspapers to improve vocabulary .....

Maybe, some students like me have no time to listen to radio .....

(Student I: Male, High Proficiency, SocSc)

**Themes 6 and 7**

**Proficiency levels did not influence their perceptions of courses.**  
**Disciplines did not influence their perceptions of courses.**

The interview data did not entirely support these themes. The data suggested that interviewees who were confident and more proficient had a better opinion of the English Proficiency Courses. Student E (Male, Average Proficiency, SocSc), a



confident student and relatively fluent in English who majored in TESL in a Teachers' Training College, expressed enjoyment of the English courses, and felt that they helped him remember what he learnt in college. Student J (Male, High Proficiency, ApplSc), a confident and highly proficient student, felt that some of the courses were too easy for him, but enjoyed the Writing Skill Course which the other less proficient students found very difficult:

To me the most useful part is 'Writing Skill Part II'. It prepares a person to start in the future to write thesis footnotes etc. Most challenging.

It does not have an exam but I think it is tougher. Exam easier. One shot I can get through. This one you don't study but lots of work – a lot of photostating, a lot of support materials.

(Student J: Male, High Proficiency, ApplSc)

Student L (Female, High Proficiency, BusAdm), also highly confident and proficient in English had nothing but good things to say regarding the English Proficiency Courses, and even asked for debates, dramas and poetry-reading. Only one student i.e., Student K (Male, High Proficiency, BusAdm) found the High Proficiency course, he was taking, tough.

Thus, it was evident from the data that proficiency levels did play a part in determining perceptions of courses. As for disciplines, there was no evidence to suggest that they influenced perceptions of English Proficiency Courses. I was expecting BusAdm students to be more aware of the need to improve their English in order to make themselves more 'marketable', but there was no evidence of this. Maybe, this was not a major concern, since most of them were already in rather stable occupations.

## Theme 8

**Distance learners had a higher opinion of their teachers' capabilities in meeting their needs than in their own independence and their own abilities in coping with the courses.**

The results supported this theme. Eight interviewees explicitly stated that they needed more teacher's guidance and support, in forms such as tutorials and teacher-marked assignments, to help them improve their English. One student (i.e., Student K) even wanted tutorials during the semester break. The results here clearly indicated a lack of autonomy among these students as they expected someone to take charge of their learning.

*Tanpa* (without) guidance, *kita tidak boleh cope dengan* (we cannot cope with) higher level.....

(With teacher-marked assignments), we know our mistakes. We can improve our English.

(Student B, Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

Time is not enough. Need more tutorials. Tutors should provide more opportunities for us to speak. I am not fluent. Need more oral activities....

(Student C, Male, Low Proficiency, ApplSc)

We want to improve our English. We should get more tutorials classes. Intensive courses in the month of semester break. Because semester break is too long. Nothing to do. All Sundays or two weeks once during semester break should be English.

(Student K, Male, High Proficiency, BusAdm)



Two tutorials not enough, maybe three or four. Have more discussion. Mostly discussions. Oral activities among ourselves. Tutorials should focus on the exams.

(Student L, Female, High Proficiency, BusAdm)

Three others did not want more tutorials, not because they felt that they would not be useful, but because they would not have the time to attend them. Two others (of High Proficiency level) felt that two were enough for them but felt that there should be more for students of Lower Proficiency levels.

### Theme 9

**Distance learners' approaches to studying affected their perceptions of the teaching and learning of learning English as L2.**

The associations between approaches to studying and perceptions of courses could not be determined from the interviews as the questions were not designed for this purpose. However, what was repeatedly revealed from the interviews was that most interviewees indulged in ineffective study practices in learning/studying English, notwithstanding whether they had positive, or negative perceptions of the English Proficiency Courses. This resulted in them being 'unsuccessful' language learners. They attributed this to a 'lack of time', but in reality, they appeared to display also a lack of awareness about language learning and the language learning processes, and an unwillingness to take charge of their own learning. This will be discussed in greater depth in section 10.3.2.

**Theme 10**

**Relying on memorising, Syllabus-boundedness, and Extrinsic Motivation were associated with positive and negative evaluations of teaching and courses.**

There was insufficient evidence to support or contradict **Theme 10**. However, the interviews data did provide us some insights regarding Memorising, Syllabus-boundedness, and Extrinsic Motivation. Since most of the interviewees were studying last minute it was reasonable to assume that, to a large extent, they were depending on memorisation, like this student:

Akhir, I think, pada saya, saya mudah ingat last minute. Kalau buat revision awal-awal lupa. Dulu saya buat nota-nota tetapi semester dulu saya target dua minggu sebelum exam, saya study hard, very hard sampai dua pagi. Saya boleh recall balik. Inggeris belajar sambil belajar lain. Bila saya boring apabila saya belajar psikologi saya buat Inggeris.

**Translation**

At the end. I think I can remember better last minute. If I carry our my revision earlier, I cannot remember. I used to make notes but last semester I gave myself a target. Two weeks before the examination, I studied very hard, until two o'clock in the morning. I can recall back. I study English while studying other subjects. When I am bored of studying psychology, I study English.

(Student B: Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

Besides studying English last minute, she mentioned that she did some exercises and occasionally read the New Straits Times. She complained that her English had not improved at all. Not surprising, since she put so little effort into learning the language. The same seemed to apply to the other interviewees as well. The analysis of approaches to studying through the NASI suggested the association of Memorisation to Deep approach, and Strategic approach, but this was not evident in



the interviews. As mentioned earlier the interview questions were not designed to investigate approaches to studying, so it is not surprising that the data did not divulge any such information.

Syllabus-boundedness could be inferred from the interview data. An indication of this was the interviewees' zealous attempts to look for tips from lecturers and English Language instructors with regard to what they should study. This seemed to be the result of the 'lack of time' phenomenon. This suggested that Syllabus-boundedness, in this case, was negative as the interviewees were not learning beyond what was absolutely necessary.

The data revealed that all the interviewees were motivated by extrinsic factors to further their studies. The factors include:

All my family members are graduate that is why I want to upgrade myself. I try to apply to go to University but I couldn't get a place.

(Student H: Female, Average Proficiency, BusAdm)

Further my studies, to upgrade myself, find a better job.

(Student L: Female, High Proficiency, BusAdm)

Salary low, cost of living in KL (Kuala Lumpur) high. I need a higher salary. The only way is to get a degree.

(Student F: Male, Average Proficiency, ApplSc)

With regard to the learning of English, it was compulsory for the students to sit and pass twelve units of it. English was also included in the PNGK (Purata Nilai Gred Kumulatif)(Cumulative Grade Point Average). This determines whether a student gets a first class, second class [upper/lower] or a third class degree). This means that a student's scores in English would affect their overall PNGK. Thus, there was an extrinsic factor motivating them to perform well in English. Besides, all students

interviewed realised the importance of English and felt that the university should continue to offer the English Proficiency Courses. Higher proficiency students wanted more courses.

Yes, it is the second language in Malaysia. We see those in Standard 6, their standard is so poor. (Student E: Average Proficiency, SocSc)

Important to have English, International Language.

I would like more English courses but how can we manage? because we have other things to study. (Student L: High Proficiency, BusAdm)

Should offer English because Malaysians English not very good. Opportunity to learn, but should give more suitable time. (Student K: High Proficiency, ApplSc)

Yes, I am dealing with vendors in Sony so I need to be good in English. maybe one of these days I want to major in English.

I think it is a good idea to have more courses. Why not have Sijil (Certificate) in Public Speaking/Effective Communication. (Student M: High Proficiency, BusAdm)

More courses? Yes, because English is very important. Quality of English is very poor. Need to improve English.

We must make English compulsory in School like last time. (Student I: High Proficiency, BusAdm)

Eleven out of the thirteen students felt that it should be included in the PNGK. Some of their responses are as follows:

If you don't nobody will do well. (Student F: Average Proficiency, SocSc)

Then nobody will study it. (Student L: High Proficiency, BusAdm)



I think so it will help to improve others English. If not they won't bother to study. (Student E: Average Proficiency, SocSc)

Yes, should be in PNGK. Help me improve my grades. (Student B: Low Proficiency, SocSc)

Credits? Yes, if not students will not be interested to study English. I also will not be interested. (Student I: High Proficiency, SocSc)

Yes, I am good in English. It benefits me. (Student J: High Proficiency)

Only one student felt strongly that it should not be included in the PNGK as it would affect her grades negatively (Student A: Low Proficiency). And only one student felt that it was unimportant whether it was included or not:

More courses, even though I have to spend more time. Grades optional. Only want opportunity to improve.

(Student C: Low Proficiency, ApplSc -- the only student who studied consistently)

The unexpected thing was that although all the students were extrinsically-motivated to learn English, none of them appeared to be spending much time studying English and depended on external forces to encourage and support study.

### **10.3.2 Analysis of other relevant themes arising from the data**

In this section I will discuss other relevant themes from the interview data that will shed more light on students' beliefs about language learning. An examination of the interviews revealed that the interviewees' views about the best way to improve their

English varied and there was no approach that was consistent with proficiency level or discipline. Some of the views include the following:

I think to improve English I must read more but I have no time.

English *bukan* (not) learning subject. *Dia* (It's) natural. *Hanya* (Only) study grammar and do exercises. *Kita tidak dapat belajar* (We do not need to study) passages. To improve *vocab saya baca NST* (vocabulary I study the New Straits Times).

(Student A: Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)

Tutorials should provide us with more opportunity to speak. My main problem is writing, and speaking too.

I think we should have more tutorials to discuss our problems face-to-face.

(Student C, Male, Low Proficiency, ApplSc)

I prefer grammar. Oral activities I can practise myself. I need to know what grammar to use in different situations. Normally, I talked to people I want to know whether my grammar is correct or not.

I want the teachers to focus on grammar points. If I talked in not grammatical way I feel not confident to speak.

(Student F, Male, Average Proficiency, ApplSc)

The English course is very ideal but we don't have time. English is not a studying subject. We have to use it.

(Student K, Male, High Proficiency, BusAdm)

English we have to practise, not like other subject. But I don't have time to practise and don't have the environment.

I like to have more discussion. Mostly discussion and oral activities among ourselves.

(Student L, Male, High Proficiency, BusAdm)



The above quotations also indicated that these interviewees realised that English is not a 'studying subject', like a content course, and learning English involves a lot of practice. One of these students (i.e. Student F) appeared to belong to the category that Ellis and Sinclair (1989:8) described as being 'analytical', i.e., students who would like to be as accurate as possible at all times. Some students (e.g., Student A) believed that learning English is a 'natural process'. Ellis and Sinclair (1989a:8) described this as relaxed style, i.e., 'picking up' language without really making too much effort. Only Students J and M appeared to belong to this category. The rest appeared to belong to the mixed category. There was evidence of a certain amount of 'naïveness' in some of the students' beliefs about learning English. As one student put it:

Other courses we can discuss with our coursemates. We understand what we study. In other courses, not language courses, we can study, we can pass. Language courses? all our coursemates same standard. And sometimes our coursemates different levels. So we cannot discuss.

(Student K: Male, High Proficiency, BusAdm)

This reference to the difference between language learning and other content-based subjects revealed an awareness of the difference, but limited insight into the difference. What I would like to suggest is that although a majority of the interviewees had some awareness of what constitutes a 'good language learner' (see Cotterall, 1995; Stern, 1975; Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al, 1978; Reiss, 1985; Ellis and Sinclair, 1989), they did not appear to have a clear idea of how to go about practising their English, and how to 'study' English autonomously. Dickinson and Carver (1980) pointed out that in order to be able to study independently a learner must have three kinds of preparations: methodological preparation, psychological preparation, and practice in self direction (see Appendix 10D for a description of these preparations). These students were not given such preparations before they started their English Language proficiency courses, nor did they display distinct evidence of being aware of such preparations. An example of their lack of awareness of what

constituted self learning was their disinterest in IT support. Only two students who possessed computers indicated some interest. The others, even those who possessed a computer, were not in favour of it, claiming that poor students would not be able to afford it. Besides, none of them was aware of the availability of an English Resource Centre within the English Proficiency Department. Admittedly, this information should be made available to all distance learners at the beginning of the courses, which the department failed to do. However, the students also had the onus to find out about such matters, which none of them bothered to do. When informed of the facility and the fact that it was not open during off-office hours, none of them showed much interest, claiming that it was not convenient for them to visit the centre during working hours, in spite of the fact that some of them lived within a few miles of the university main campus. They were also not keen to visit the facility during school holidays. These findings clearly indicated a lack of willingness and capacity for independent learning.

There was also clear evidence of a consumer-approach to language learning. They seemed to be over-concerned that they were not getting their money's worth. They had the tendency to attribute their lack of progress to the items (such as materials, units, tutorials etc.) that they paid for.

Kita bayar \$130 x 12 units untuk Inggeris tetapi apabila kita graduate standard Inggeris masih sam. Belajar untuk Peperiksaan sahaja. Walaupun ambil Inggeris, masih sama – tidak improve. .... Tanpa lebih guidance kita tidak cope dengan higher level.

### Translation

We pay \$130 x 12 units for English but when we graduate our standard of English is still the same. We study for examination only. Although we have taken English, our English is still the same – no improvement.... Without more guidance we cannot cope at higher level.

(Student B: Female, Low Proficiency, SocSc)



We pay a lot but not much facilities. Not enough tutorials. Whole cost \$15,600 much more than university students.

(Student F: Male, Average Proficiency, ApplSc)

## 10.4 Overall discussion of results

Some of the results of the interviews supported those of the NCPQs (discussed in Chapter 9). They reiterated that the distance learners generally had a favourable opinion of the staff, and the courses of the English Proficiency Department. But, they contradicted those of the NCPQs, in revealing that most distance learners would prefer more support and guidance, than greater freedom in learning. Besides, the interviews also revealed that most of the distance learners were not very confident, as far as the learning of English was concerned. In my opinion, Knowles' theory can help to explain some of these contradictions. Knowles (1975:64-68) pointed out that adults possess a self-concept of being responsible for their decisions and their lives. This will lead to the development of a deep psychological need, to be seen and treated by others, as being capable of self-direction. I believe that this attitude might have influenced the distance learners, to respond to the NCPQs, in a more positive manner, than they really felt. This over-enthusiasm could also be a result of a desire to show their approval of the courses. Studies (for e.g., Kelly & Swift, 1983; Fage, 1987; Hiola and Moss, 1990; Hiola, 1988; and Stevenson et al, 1996,1998) on the attitudes of distance learners to face-to-face tutorials provisions, clearly showed that distance learners' strongly supported this form of instruction. I believe that the distance learners of the present study are of no exception.

One very important finding that was clearly evident in the interview data, and the quantitative data was that both indicated that heavy workload was a serious problem with the distance learners. Studies (for e.g., Kahl & Cropley, 1986) revealed that distance learners faced more anxiety in learning compared to face-to face learners

due to reasons such as the pressure from competing roles and needs, lower levels of self-confidence and poorer study skills. In the case of the distance learners under investigation in this thesis, the results of Study Two revealed that they appeared to be more confident and have more effective approaches to studying than on-campus learners. Study Three further revealed that they had clearer goals and standards than on-campus learners. This study seemed to suggest that competing roles and needs, which was perceived by them as 'heavy workload' and 'lack of time', resulted in them being unable to utilise the positive approaches and strategies to studying that they already possessed effectively in learning English. Instead they indulged in 'bad study habits', such as memorising, depending on last minute tips from supervisors and last-minute revision. However, in my opinion there is another possible explanation for these frequent complaints about heavy workload. I would like to suggest that the distance learners seemed to be favourably disposed towards distance learning as long as it was convenient for them and their lifestyles, but as soon as distance learning demanded more time and effort, they started to complain about the workload, the course materials, the examinations etc. This suggests the likelihood that these distance learners have the capacity for making informed decisions about their own learning, but may choose not to be self-directed at times (see for eg., Dickinson, 1988, 1992; Holec, 1981; Ellis and Sinclair, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Sinclair, 1994, 1999, 2000; Wenden, 1991).

Another finding of the interview data that contradicted that of the NCPQs is that distance learners of Higher Proficiency appeared to have a better opinion of the EPCs. This, however, did not result in them becoming more efficient learners than the Lower Proficiency learners as most of them still indulged in last minute 'mugging'. Besides, Memorising and Syllabus-boundedness seemed to have negative implications as far as these students were concerned.



Research into what motivates distance learners reveals both extrinsic and intrinsic motives (see Appendix 10E for a list of some of the main motives why distance learners participate in distance education programmes). According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation refers to learning situations where people perform an activity for its own sake rather than because of external pressure or promise of reward for doing it. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to learning situations where the reason for doing a task is something other than an interest in the task (or broader learning endeavour) itself. In addition, undertaking the task may be something the person feels pressured to do rather than genuinely wants to do (p.35). This more general distinction is related to Gardner's integrative/instrumental dichotomy. Initial studies undertaken by Gardner and Lambert and others on second/foreign language learning (see for e.g., Gardner and Lambert, 1985; Lambert, 1972; and Spolsky, 1969) showed that integratively-orientated (or intrinsically-motivated) individuals were more highly motivated than instrumentally-orientated (or extrinsically-motivated) ones. A recent research by Dörnyei and Clément (2000 cited in Dörnyei 2001:51) supported this finding. However, research carried out on Asian students seemed to suggest the reverse (Lukmani, 1972; Kachru, 1977; Warden and Lin, 2000). The interviews undertaken in this study also revealed that all thirteen interviewees seemed to be more extrinsically-motivated than intrinsically motivated to study at a distance. This finding contradicted that of Study Two which suggested that, generally, the distance learners were more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically motivated. The interview data, instead, suggested that the interviewees appeared to be aware of the importance of learning English, and were extrinsically motivated to pass it, but lacked the motivation to try to perform well in it.

As a whole, what did the contradictions suggest regarding the distance learners? I would like to suggest that they revealed the paradox of the 'desirable' versus the 'desired' (Hofstede, 1991:). This can be seen in their desire to be seen as a grown up, autonomous individuals, in charge of their own lives, and the reversion back to total dependence on Teacher, which was evident in their requests for more tutorials,

teacher's guidance and support, and more teacher-marked assignments, in a hope for an easy solution to their language learning problems. This can also be extended to their belief that more support would be good (desirable) but actually wanting something quick and easy, requiring minimal effort (desired) to help them achieve success in language learning. It can also be seen in terms of students' awareness of the importance of intrinsic motivation, but finding themselves 'motivated by a desire to pass their examinations' more than anything else. Their requests for more grammar exercises, more discussions, more activities etc., and then turning round and saying, "I don't have time for them", could also be seen as sign of an awareness of what was appropriate and a desire for a 'quick fix' to solve their language learning difficulties

Tudor (1996) pointed out:

many learners may be relatively ill-prepared for assuming a self-directive role in language study, either because they lack the necessary knowledge and skills, or simply because their prior learning experience or their culturally-based expectations of language study have led them to assume that language learning is an essentially teacher-driven undertaking.

(Tudor, 1996:41)

There is indeed evidence in the interview data to support Tudor's view (1996). The data revealed a lack of knowledge and skills about self-directed learning in the form of lack of awareness of language learning and language learning processes. The interviewees' strong disapproval of the modules because examination questions were not based on them, is a clear indication of their lack of awareness of the purposes of the examinations, and modules. They did not realise that examinations are to test skills and not to test content (Little, 1991:40). As for modules, they did not realise that they were designed to help them to be able to identify specific learning objectives, and to provide relevant tasks, keys, and feedback so that they could learn more effectively on their own. The interview data also revealed limited insight into the difference between language learning and content courses, and how to study English effectively on their own.



A consumer-approach towards language learning in the form of desire for more support from teachers is also evident in the data. This is a very post-modernistic concept. It is related to what is term the consumers' rights to get what they pay for. When applied to learning, it may not be that appropriate, especially when the 'consumers' are not sure what is the best for them.

The possibility that the learners genuinely desired more support because they believed that "language learning is an essentially teacher-driven" (Tudor, 1996) contradicts the findings of the NCPQs and my earlier postulation that the learners have the capacity to learn on their own by themselves, but are sometimes unwilling to do so. Thus, the issues governing the contradictions between the findings of the NCPQs and the interviews are very complex, and I can only attempt to make some postulations. However, based on my experience with these students and review of literature, I am confident that my postulations have strong applicability to the Malaysian context.

In conclusion, I would like to admit that it may be too hasty to declare that the disturbing trend found in thirteen students is present in the whole population of ESL distance learners in UKM, or, that it can be extended to the whole population of Malaysian ESL distance learners. However, it is not over-presumptuous to say that this pattern is most probably fairly prevalent among Malaysian ESL distance learners, especially those from the urban areas of Malaysia, such as areas around Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Johor Bahru and Penang. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next section.

## 10.5 Implications of the findings to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL distance learning context

There is a need to explore the claim that the workload is too heavy, and to try to rectify this problem if it is found to be valid. More importantly, it is necessary to explore what can be done to change their overall attitudes towards learning English. This involves making them realise the inappropriateness of some of their beliefs regarding the learning of English, and promoting greater language and language processes awareness. There is also a need to make them aware of the need to invest time and effort in learning a language through continual practice and review. It is also necessary to promote greater autonomy among the students. This can be accomplished through the introduction of an orientation/learner training programme which will be discussed in depth in Chapter eleven, the last chapter of the thesis.

The finding that the distance learners appears to have reasonably good perceptions of the courses and staff of the English Proficiency Department is a positive sign. However, we should be cautious not to read too much into this as there is a possibility that these students' strong approval may be their way of showing support for the distance learning mode of instruction, and for being given a 'second chance' to further their studies.



## CHAPTER 11

# Summary, Pedagogical implications, and Strategy for developing an ESL distance learning programme

### 11.1 Introduction

In this final chapter of the thesis, I will first summarise the main findings, and the implications of the three studies to the teaching and learning of English as L2. Then I will proceed to describe the strategy for developing a distance learning programme that I have devised based on the findings of this thesis. Then, I will list out some of the limitations of the studies undertaken in this thesis. Finally, I will present some concluding remarks.

### 11. 2 Summary of the main findings of the three studies

Study One which investigated Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning styles, revealed that the dominant learning style among distance learners was the 'analytical-communicative learning style'. It further revealed that more distance learners were oriented to learning English on their own than on-campus learners. This suggested that more of them were capable of utilising opportunities in their daily life to interact in English. However, there was still a reasonably high

percentage of distance learners who were very dependent on classroom interaction, and teachers' directions and guidance. There was also a smaller and less significant group of distance learners who expressed no interest in classroom interaction, and were more audio-visual oriented.

The findings further suggested that distance learners of High Proficiency level were more oriented to learning English successfully at a distance, and the reverse was true in the case of the Low Proficiency learners, which hinted at a positive relationship between distance learners' proficiency levels in English, and their abilities to learn English successfully. There was also indication in the study that Applied Science distance learners were the most oriented to learning English successfully at a distance, and the Social Science distance learners, the least oriented.

I arrived at the conclusion that many of the differences between the learning styles of distance learners and on-campus learners could be attributed to cognitive style flexibility. For example, distance learners' greater orientation to learning English independently than on-campus learners, could be attributed to the inclination among more 'mobile' on-campus and distance learners to opt for learning styles they considered more appropriate to their mode of learning. This argument could also be used to explain the differences between the learning styles of distance learners and on-campus learners of High Proficiency level, and the learning styles of Applied Science (High Proficiency) distance learners and on-campus learners.

Study Two, which investigated Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying in general, (i.e. in learning of all subjects) and revealed the presence of two principal orientations towards studying among distance learners and on-campus learners. These orientations are similar to Entwistle and Ramsden's Meaning Orientation and Reproducing Orientation. These results are consistent with those of Entwistle and colleagues and others undertaken in various parts of the



world, and suggested that the distinction between a reproducing orientation and a meaning orientation in the Malaysian context is as valid as those in other contexts.

The results further revealed a similar pattern of preferences with regard to the different approaches to studying. In general, notwithstanding whichever mode, proficiency level or discipline, the learners were from. Distance learners, generally, showed a preference for Deep Approach to studying, were fairly motivated and committed to their studies, had fairly good study habits and were able to manage time fairly well. They were more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated. The level of self-confidence was generally below the level of Extrinsic Motivation, and they did not encounter the problem of Lack of Direction. These similarities confirmed the 'portability' of the ASI from one system to another, and strongly suggested that mainstream research literature based on the study of campus-based students will be valid for describing the approaches to studying in general of Malaysian ESL distance learners.

The findings further revealed that more distance learners utilised deep approach techniques in comparison to the on-campus learners. They were also more motivated, committed, systematic, well-organised, and able to manage time better than the on-campus learners. They also indicated greater confidence academically. These findings are very encouraging as they suggest that Malaysian distance learners possess more desirable forms of studying behaviour than the Malaysian on-campus learners. These findings are in keeping with those undertaken in other distance learning contexts (Harper and Kember, 1986 and Richardson et al. 1999), and contribute to the general belief that these differences are caused by factors related to a difference in age, such as differences in level of interest, experience, maturity, and self-reliance which all influence study behaviour. As for the on-campus learners, their preference for less desirable studying behaviour may be a result of orientations they acquired from the examination-orientated mode of learning and studying in Malaysian schools.

There was evidence of greater reliance on memorisation in the case of the distance learners. However, the pattern of memorisation being used in conjunction with understanding (Kember, 1996; Watkins, 1996) was more prevalent in the distance learners than in the on-campus learners, which suggested a high proportion of the distance learners used memorisation as a means towards understanding. The results suggested that the higher proportion of rote learning among the on-campus learners may also be due to their examination-oriented approach, and the teacher-centred approach used in schools which do not give much room for creative and critical thinking.

With regard to syllabus-boundedness, there was some indication that the distance learners indicated a higher preference for highly structured courses, and diligence in checking of course schedules than on-campus learners. These characteristics, I believe, arose from over-anxiety and fear that they had not been studying what were required of them, and were also an indication that the course programmes, possibly, lacked sufficient guidelines and well-planned structures.

The findings also revealed that generally the High Proficiency learners (both distance learners and on-campus learners) were more effective, and academically more confident compared to lower proficiency levels. These findings comply with normal expectations that learners with higher proficiency will manifest more desirable approaches to studying.

The findings further indicated that distance learners from the SocSc and BusAdm groups displayed more desirable approaches to studying in general than those from the Applied Science group. The results supported Ramsden and Entwistle (1981) to a certain extent. But they contradicted those of Harper and Kember (1986), Morgan et al. (1980) and Richardson et al (1999). This reaffirmed the general belief that



approaches to studying in general vary with academic context. In the Malaysian context, the results do contribute to the belief that Science students, due to the nature of the discipline they are studying, tend not to manifest deep approaches and critical thinking strategies.

However, it is important to be aware of the fact that Study two investigated learners' conceptions of their approaches to studying in general, and not specifically, the studying/learning of English. A crucial question to ask at this stage is to what extent are these findings applicable to the studying/ learning of English. A factor analysis of the combined ASI scales/subscales and the CPQ scales revealed a basic pattern associating positive approaches to studying with positive evaluations of the teaching of English, and the English courses, and negative approaches with negative evaluations. This suggested that learning approaches to studying in general affected learners' perceptions of the teaching and learning of not only content courses but also language courses. This pattern was found in both distance learners and on-campus learners suggesting that this pattern was not unduly influenced by mode of learning.

Study Three investigated Malaysian ESL learners' perceptions of their English Proficiency Courses through the NCPQs and interviews. The results of the NCPQs supported those of Study Two in suggesting that the distance learners were more confident. They also revealed them to have much clearer perceptions of the goals and standard expected of them, and had a more positive attitudes of the staff and courses of the EPD than on-campus learners. However, out of all these findings, the only one that was clearly evident in the interview data was that the distance learners generally had a favourable opinion of the staff and the courses of the EPD. Besides that, the findings of the interviews contradicted those of the NCPQs in revealing that most distance learners would prefer more support and guidance, than greater freedom in learning (which was found in the NCPQs). Knowles' theory (1975) could be used to explain some of these contradictions. I believe that the distance learners responded in a more positive manner towards the NCPQs than they really felt,

because as Knowles (1975) puts it as adults they would like to appear capable of being responsible for their decisions and their lives and would like to be treated by others as such. Their over-enthusiasm could also be a result of a desire to show their strong support for the distance learning courses. This finding is supported by studies carried out on distance learners by Kelly & Swift (1983); Fage (1987); Hiola, (1988); Hiola & Moss (1990); and Stevenson et al, (1996, 1998).

The results of the CPQs and the interviews further suggested that heavy workload was a serious problem with the distance learners. Thus, it seemed that competing roles and needs, which was perceived by them as 'heavy workload' and 'lack of time', resulted in them being unable to utilise the positive approaches and strategies to studying that they already possessed effectively in learning English. However, there is also the possibility that their complaints about heavy workload and 'lack of time' were mere excuses used to justify not spending more time learning and studying English.

The results of the NCPQs indicated that proficiency levels did not influence distance learners' perceptions of courses, but the interview data suggested that distance learners of higher proficiency appeared to have a better opinion of the EPCs. Unfortunately, this did not result in them becoming more efficient learners than the Lower Proficiency learners as most of them still indulged in last minute 'mugging'. Besides, Memorising and Syllabus-boundedness seemed to have negative implications as far as these distance learners were concerned.

Similar to results obtained from studies carried out on Asians (see Lukmani, 1972; Kachru, 1977; Warden and Lin, 2000), the interviews undertaken in this study revealed that all thirteen interviewees (all distance learners) seemed to be more extrinsically-motivated than intrinsically-motivated to studying at a distance. This finding contradicted that of Study Two which suggested that the distance learners



were more intrinsically- motivated than extrinsically-motivated in their approaches to studying. Besides, the interviewees appeared to be aware of the importance of learning English, and were extrinsically-motivated to pass English. However, there was a lack of motivation to perform well in English.

I would like to suggest that the results revealed the paradox of the 'desirable' versus the 'desired' (Hofstede, 1991:). This could be seen in these distance learners' desire to be seen as a grown up, autonomous individuals, in charge of their own lives, and the reversion back to total dependence on Teacher, which was evident in their requests for more tutorials, teacher's guidance and support, and more teacher-marked assignments, in a hope for an easy solution to their language learning problems. This could also be extended to their belief that more support would be good (desirable), but actually wanting something quick and easy, requiring minimal effort (desired) to help them achieve success in language learning. The interview data also revealed a consumer-approach towards language learning that led to a desire for more support in order to get one's money worth.

There was also evidence of lack of awareness of language learning and language learning processes, and what is involved in autonomous learning in the interview data. The interview data further revealed limited insight into the difference between language learning and content courses, and how to study English effectively on their own.

### **11.3 Implications of the findings of the three studies to the teaching and learning of English as a second language**

Study One was carried out to determine Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning styles. The findings suggested the possibility that differences in learning styles between distance learners and on-campus learners were a result of cognitive style flexibility. Basically, it appeared that High Proficiency learners and Applied Science (High Proficiency learners) were the most 'mobile' in terms of learning styles. These findings suggested that in designing an ESL distance learning programme it is necessary to assure that these learning styles are taken into consideration. Besides, it is necessary to teach through the students' styles and also to "help the students stretch by learning through alternative styles" (Kinsella, 1995: 190).

Study Two was carried out to explore Malaysian ESL learners' approaches to studying in general. It revealed that the underlying constructs and the pattern of preferences of both the distance learners and the on-campus learners were the same. It further indicated that learning approaches to studying in general affected learners' perceptions of the teaching and learning of not only content courses, but also language courses. This pattern was found in both distance learners and on-campus learners suggesting that this pattern was not unduly influenced by mode of learning. This suggested the possibility of applying the extensive literature on student learning, L2, and adult learning in the conventional classroom setting to the distance learning context. There was further evidence that distance learners were more capable of utilising 'effective' learning approaches. A highly probable cause for this was difference in age. This suggested that courses designed for distance learners should allow greater flexibility in choosing subjects and greater opportunity for them



to work at their own pace. But, clear guidelines and well-structured programmes should be prioritised to avoid insecurity arising from uncertainty regarding what is expected of them. The extent of flexibility should also vary according to proficiency levels, since High Proficiency distance learners appeared more capable of handling their courses. What is suggested is that greater flexibility should be given to learners of higher proficiency, and more guided courses should be offered to learners of lower proficiency levels.

Study Two also revealed a higher incidence of memorisation among distance learners, although to a large extent this was memorisation with understanding (which should not be considered as negative). Nevertheless, innovative courses which encouraged critical thinking should be included. These courses are particularly vital to Applied Science group since there was evidence that they tended to adopt less desirable approaches to studying.

The only finding that was clearly evident in both the NCPQ and the interviews, was that the distance learners appeared to have reasonably good perceptions of the courses and staff of the English Language Proficiency Department. This is a positive sign. However, we should be cautious not to read too much into this, as there is a possibility that these students' strong approval may be their way of showing support for the distance learning mode of instruction, and for being given a 'second chance' to further their studies.

The findings of the interviews contradicted those of the NCPQ in many ways as discussed in Section 11.2. I believe that the implication of this is not that the results derived from the NASI and the NCPQ are incorrect. What I would like to suggest is that the distance learners are aware of the appropriate approaches to studying in general, but they may not be able to apply them to the learning of English due to extenuating circumstances, such as lack of awareness of language learning and

language learning processes. In solving their problems, the most important step is to change their overall attitudes towards the learning of English as I believe that is the root of their problems. This involves making them realise the inappropriateness of some of their beliefs regarding the learning of English, and promoting greater language and language processes awareness, and greater autonomy among students. This can be accomplished through the introduction of learner training. Since the findings of Study Two revealed that learners of High Proficiency level were more flexible, my suggestion is that in introducing learner training more preparation has to be given to Low Proficiency learners in the beginning stage. Finally, the problem put forth by the distance learners as being their major problem, i.e. heavy workload, also needs to be explored to find out to what extent it is valid, and to rectify it, if necessary.

## **11.4 Strategy for developing a distance learning ESL programme**

Based on the findings of the three studies undertaken in this thesis, I would like to make the following proposals for distance learning students.

### **11.4.1 Proposal One -- Reorganisation of the English Proficiency Programme (EPP)**

First, I would like to suggest the dividing of the EPP into two levels:

#### **Level 1: General English Proficiency Courses (GEPCs)**

Two courses should be offered at this level. The level of difficulty will be equivalent to that of VG1023 and VG1033. However, there will be changes in the courses in line with the ideas put forth in Proposal 2. These courses are designed for distance learners who have not reached a certain level in the SPM/EPT or other recognised examinations. Exemptions from these courses will be given to the better students



(see Appendix 1C for more information on criteria and conditions for exemptions). Credits will be given to exempted students.

### Level 2: High Level English Proficiency Courses

Students are allowed to choose the maximum of two courses from this level. These courses are not compulsory and students can opt to replace them with courses from other departments. Courses in this level are equivalent to the following under the present system i.e. English for Specific Purposes/ English for Occupational Purposes, which include English for: Social Sciences, Applied Sciences, Law, Medicine, Business, and Nursing. Other advanced level courses like Critical Thinking, Interactive Reading, and Writing Skills should also be included. However, Speech Communication and Public Speaking should not be offered as the distance learning mode is not conducive to the learning of the skills required by these courses.

Under this proposal, students have to acquire only **6 units of English**, and not 12, which is the case in the present system. Fig. 11.1 gives a description of how students are divided under this new proposal.

(Low Proficiency level students)	(Average Proficiency level students)	(High Proficiency level students)
Courses students have to take: VG 1023* (3 units) VG1033* (3 units)	Courses students have to take: VG 1033* (3 units)  Exempted from VG 1023* (awarded 3 free units)	Courses students have to take: None  Exempted from both VG 1023* & VG 1033* (awarded 6 free units)
Optional courses: High level courses		

\* Courses equivalent to those specified

Fig. 11.1 A description of division of students under this new proposal.

#### 11.4.1.1 Reasons for recommending this proposal

1. Students are not forced to sign up for the high level courses. This means a greater likelihood of getting genuinely motivated students for the high level courses.
2. This will increase flexibility in the programme, in the sense that students have the choice to decide whether they want to take the high level courses or not, which will be more acceptable to the adult distance learners.
3. This move will reduce the number of students taking EPCs which means it will be easier to implement the learner training programme that I am going to suggest in Proposal 2. In time, more students may sign up for the high level courses, but by then the department will be more equipped to handle larger student population.
4. This move is in line with initiatives to reduce the number of students taking English, thus reducing the amount of money spent on the teaching of English. The forcing of students to take 12 units of English under the present system is not cost-effective, and is counter productive, as many of these students are not motivated to improve their English. What I propose is the channelling of some of the money saved to the improvement of the English Proficiency Programme.

#### 11.4.2 Proposal Two -- Learner Training

"Learner training could be defined as the process by which learners are helped to deepen their understanding of the nature of language learning, and to acquire the knowledge and skills they need in order to pursue their learning goals in an informed and self-directive manner" (Tudor, 1996:37). It is not a one way flow of information in which the teacher provides learners with the knowledge and skills they possess, but is a forum within which the teacher and learners exchange insights and perceptions of the learning process. Gremmo and Riley (1995:158) further explained that the aim of learner-training is not to transform all learners into 'successful



language learners', with the cognitive and psycho-social features which research has identified, but rather to help learners to come to terms with their strengths and weaknesses, to learn a language efficiently in ways which are compatible with their personalities.

There are many ways of carrying out learner training. Some approaches, such as the one by Thomas and Augstein (1985) at the Centre for the Study of Human Learning, and Willing's (1981) in his book, 'Teaching how to learn', are very teacher-controlled. CRAPEL's (Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues) 'learning to learn' schemes, the Cambridge system, McCafferty's proposal, and Moray House College scheme (see Dickinson, 1987: 44-58) are more learner-centred. However, none of these schemes are tailored for the distance learning context. Since the English Proficiency Department of UKM has never embarked on any autonomous learning scheme before, it will be too much to expect the university to accept a completely learner-centred scheme at the start. So the learner training scheme I propose, will draw upon some of the ideas from the above mentioned schemes, but it will not be fully learner-centred. I will also be drawing upon ideas I obtained from attending a series of seminars and workshops organised by CIEL (Curriculum and Independence for the learners). CIEL is one of the ten language projects funded by HEFCE under *the fund for the development of Teaching and Learning*. The aims of CIEL are to identify, disseminate, and support best practices in independent learning through integration with the taught language curriculum (for more information on CIEL go to <http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk>). Ideas will also be drawn from works of Little (1991), Dickinson (1987), Dickinson and Carver, (1980), Ellis and Sinclair (1989a; 1989b; 1989c), Cotterall (1995), Reid (1995, 1998), Kinsella (1995), Gremmo and Riley (1995), Victori and Lockhart (1995), Tudor (1996), and Sinclair et. al (2000).

The learner training scheme proposed here will begin on a modest scale, but hopefully, it will increase in size and stature with more funding and support from UKM and other organisations. The scheme proposed here will be considered the first stage of development towards a totally learner-centred scheme, which is the ultimate goal. This scheme has two main components:

(1) Preparation of teachers

(2) Preparation of learners

It is commonly acknowledged that both learners and teachers need to take preparations to undertake self-instruction. Dickinson and Carver distinguished between psychological preparation, and practical or methodological preparation. Holec (1980:27) described psychological preparation as a gradual "deconditioning process" through which the learner can free himself from many kinds of assumptions and prejudices about learning languages. Dickinson (1987:121) further described psychological preparation as being concerned first with persuading learners to try self-direction, secondly with facilitating a change of attitude about language. The same three components may be use for teachers, especially in situations where teachers have to be persuaded that self-instruction is a viable mode.

Ideally, psychological preparation and methodology preparation should go hand in hand. But, there are cases where for instance the learners are either very sceptical, or reluctant to try it out. In that case psychology instruction would have to proceed before methodology preparation. Dickinson (1987) described methodology preparation for the learners as:

the process of acquiring the abilities and techniques he needs to undertake self-instruction. It is a matter first of becoming aware of learning processes and techniques which learners operate implicitly, and then combining this knowledge with certain skills more usually expected in teachers than in learners.

(p.122)



The findings of the three studies of this thesis revealed that it is necessary to provide preparation for self-instruction for the distance learners of UKM in learning English. In my opinion, psychological preparation and methodology preparations will be appropriate for this purpose. In the first section, I will describe how psychological preparation and methodological preparations of the teachers should be carried out in UKM, and in the second section, I will describe how they should be carried out on the learners.

#### **11.4.2.1 Preparation of the teachers**

It is necessary to prepare teachers to be effective facilitators in a Learner Training Scheme (LTS) as teachers who were themselves taught in the expository mode, and whose training was in the same tradition, are likely to find it difficult to make the transition from purveyor of information to counsellor and manager of learning resources (Little, 1991: 45-46). Dickinson (1987:24) recommended that teachers be given both psychological and methodological preparation. He explained that psychological preparations would help them to understand the various possible meanings of self-instruction, to reflect on their attitudes to this instructional mode, and to consider the necessary changes of roles and tasks required of the teachers. Regarding methodological preparations for the teachers, he described it as "recognising the necessary changes of teachers working in a self-instructional mode, and learning the new skills such role changes demand" (p.122). This he suggested can be acquired through learning about the methodological preparations required by the learners in order that teacher can help to prepare groups of learners (p.124).

The LTS, I propose for orientating the teachers of distance learners of UKM will begin with a three-day workshop that incorporates ideas from Dickinson's suggested workshops. The workshop will include the following:

- a session on psychological preparations of teachers for self-directed learning.
- a session on how to be an effective 'helper' (see Tough, 1979:181; Carver, 1982:33; and McCafferty, 1982);
- a session on suitable methodological preparations for the teachers;
- a session on how to use the resources available at the resource centre effectively.

This will include opportunities for teachers to practice using these resources.

The workshop will further incorporate a session to create an awareness among teachers regarding students' different learning styles. It will also attempt to familiarise teachers with activities that teachers can utilise to help 'students stretch by learning through alternative learning styles' (Kinsella, 1995: 190), in order to help them develop cognitive styles flexibility. (See Appendix 11A for 'Sample materials for preparation of teachers', which provides some ideas and resources for this workshop).

Under the present distance learning programme, students are given two face-to-face tutorials with their teachers, once before the mid-semester examination and one towards the end of the semester. Presently, the two tutorials are used to teach grammar, to run through key points of certain lessons, to discuss exam questions/formats, to carry out listening activities, and/or for writing activities. From the interview data it is clear that the two tutorials have not been utilised effectively. As pointed out by the interviewees, it is not possible to teach much in two sessions and it is a 'waste' to use them for listening activities and assessments, which as the interviewees suggested could be easily carried out by themselves at home. In my opinion these two tutorials can be more effectively used to prepare students for self-directed learning. In view of this, I would to suggest that both tutorials be converted into training sessions to be held before the mid-semester examination. The first session should be held in the second week of the semester, and the second, in the fifth week. More information on these sessions will be discussed in the next section.



Before concluding this section, I would like to add that there is a likelihood that some teachers may be unconvinced and unhappy to work in this way. Dickinson (1987:24) believed that it would be wrong to try to change them. I do see the logic in his opinion, but I believe that efforts should be undertaken to introduce them to this new way and they should be given the opportunities to try it out. I am convinced if given this opportunity, many who are initially against it, may find it more effective than the conventional way, especially in a distance learning context.

#### **11.4.2.2 Preparation of the learners**

In the LTS that I am proposing, there will be two training sessions to formally train the UKM distance learners in self-instruction. Two sessions are not sufficient for the intended purpose, but I do not foresee the university being willing to increase the amount of time and money spent on face-to-face sessions in the near future. Thus, the EPD have to make do with the two training sessions. These sessions will not follow the time schedule of the present tutorials, which is from 9am to 5pm with a two-hour lunch break in between, instead they will be divided into shorter sessions with shorter breaks in between, as learners lose concentration and get bored with sessions that are too long.

These distance learners will also have the opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills on self-directed learning through utilising the resources in the resource centre, and through discussion with the language advisor/counsellor who is in-charge of the resource centre. Those who live in the Klang valley, i.e. Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas, will be able to access these facilities from the main campus in Bangi. Regarding the distance learners in other parts of Malaysia, the English Proficiency Department will arrange for access to resource centres of other institutions, and language advisors/counsellors that are within reasonable travelling distance for them (see Appendix 11B and Appendix 11C for ideas and resources on

"the roles of a language advisor/counsellor" and "preparation of a resource centre" respectively).

Presently, the distance learners are provided study guides to help them to learn on their own, and the contents of the courses are predetermined. It is not possible to implement what Little (1991) described as teacher and students "negotiating a joint interpretations of the syllabus" (p. 45) due to the large number of distance learners that UKM is handling (for eg., for semester 1 of the 2001/2002 session, UKM had 1034 distance learners taking English Proficiency courses.). However, it is possible to revise these study guides to make them more in line with the objectives of self-directed learning, by offering greater choices of materials, and greater flexibility in the utilisation of these materials for the goals that they learners have decided on. These goals will have to be within the syllabus predetermined by the EPD, and there should be clear guidelines on how to utilise the materials, especially for Low Proficiency learners.

The use of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) to aid self-directed learning would also be taken into consideration. Some applications, such as the use of e-mail, chat-rooms, internet-based activities, and video conferencing, have been proven to be helpful (see Cameron, 1999 for examples of studies on this). However, as Gremmo and Riley (1995) pointed out these applications should be used judiciously as "It is vital, in self-directed systems that technology be at the service of the learners and not vice-versa" (p.160). Besides, there is the problem of accessibility. For example, many students do not possess a computer yet. There is also the problem of cost. A video conferencing system is very expensive to implement, and not necessary cost-effective. Thus, for the first stage of the implementation of the LTS, CALL will not be implemented yet. In a later stage when conditions are more conducive, it will be introduced. In the next section, I will describe the training sessions that I am recommending to prepare the distance



learners for self-directed learning. These sessions will take into consideration three key kinds of preparations:

1. Psychological preparation
2. Methodological preparation
3. Practice in self-direction

Dickinson (1987:125) pointed out that the amount of psychological preparation required will vary from group to group depending on learners' readiness to undertake this learning mode. For example, with learners who have time only for short preparation, it may be necessary to curtail this to a short talk, and depend on the demonstration through methodological preparation to convince those who are sceptic. Since I am planning training sessions for a large population of learners, it is not possible to cater to the needs of individual groups of learners. Thus, the programme I propose will be a flexible one with guidelines given to teachers on how to run the training sessions, accompanied by sample materials. Teachers are encouraged to produce their own materials based on the guidelines and sample materials given. The key aspects of psychological preparation that I will be incorporating in the sessions include the following:

- development of self confidence
- development of 'process orientation'
- development of self-motivation
- development of awareness of one's own learning
- development of awareness of one's own learning problems and of one's own progress

The key aspects of methodological preparation and practice in self-direction will also be taken into consideration. (see Appendix 10D for more details on such preparations). The guidelines and sample materials prepared will be divided into two categories. Type I will be for students taking GEPCs, and Type II for students taking HLCs (see Appendix 11D for 'Sample materials for preparation of learners' which provides some ideas and resources for the training sessions).

The recommended proposals given here need to be developed further into a proper programme. In order to do so, there is a need to consider the developmental plans of the EPD and the university distance learning programme. In conclusion, I would like to say that in line with the findings of this thesis, a self-directed programme along the line I have suggested would be beneficial to the ESL distance learners of UKM, and possibly, distance learners of other institutions of higher learning in Malaysia too. However, there are certain limitations that need to be highlighted, and this is undertaken in the next section of this thesis.

## 11.5 Limitations of the thesis

From the discussion of results, it is apparent that there are a number of limitations in the present thesis. Firstly, since the studies were carried out on only one university (on both conventional programme and distance learning programme), it is not possible to conclude that the findings are applicable to all such universities in Malaysia. In order to gain deeper insights into Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning processes, and their perceptions of their English proficiency courses, it would be necessary for future research to increase the sampling to include ESL learners of different universities so that the findings can be confidently generalised to a wider population. Similarly, the sampling for the interviews should be increased to distance learners from urban as well as rural students from various universities in Malaysia.



Furthermore, the collection of data through questionnaires and interviews were undertaken during the same period of time, i.e. within a three-month period. In view of that, it was not possible to analyse the results of the questionnaires first, and then make adjustments to the interviews to address issues of interest, revealed by the questionnaires.

Finally, another limitation was that some factors that may affect Malaysian ESL learners' conceptions of their learning processes, and their perceptions of their EPCs, such as social and cultural influences, and differences in ethnic origins and gender, have not been considered. It would be interesting to explore the effects of these factors in future research.

## 11.6 Concluding remarks

Despite these limitations, it is evident that the findings of this thesis have significant implications to the distance teaching and learning of English in the Malaysian context and, possibly, to other distance learning contexts too. The research is particularly significant for the following reasons:

- It is a major research of ESL distance learners in an area that has not been investigated before in Malaysia.
- It brought new insights into the conceptions of learning styles and approaches to studying, and perceptions of courses of ESL distance learners.
- It formed the basis for future development of appropriately targeted distance learning language courses for adult learners as opposed to content courses.
- It formed the basis for the development of a suitable support system for ESL distance learners.

# Bibliography

- Abd. Razak, M. N. (1998a, May, 16). *Teks ucapan sambutan Hari Guru peringkat kebangsaan (Speech delivered at the National Teachers' Day celebration)*. <http://www.moe.gov.my/ucapan8.html>.
- Abd. Razak, M. N. (1998b, February, 26.). *Reforms in education: The next stage*. Keynote address given at the National Educational Conference, Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel. <http://www.moe.gov.my/ucapan7.html>.
- Abd. Razak, M. N. (1998c, June 30). *Teks ucapan majlis penyampaian surat kelulusan pengendalian program 3+0 (Speech delivered at the presentation ceremony for permission to conduct 3+0 programme)*. <http://www.moe.gov.my/ucapan11.html>.
- Abdul Rahman, Z. (1994). *Factors related to completion of distance education courses in the off-campus degree program at University Sains Malaysia*. Unpublished Degree of Doctor of Education, Carolina State University, North Carolina.
- Allwright, R. L. (1982). Perceiving and pursuing learners' needs. *Geddes and Sturtridge*, 24-31.
- Alsagoff, S. A. (1985). *A study of learning styles, student characteristics and faculty perceptions of the distance education programme at USM*. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Washington, Washington.
- Amundsen, C. (1993). The evolution of theory in distance education. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 61-79). London: Routledge.
- Baath, J. A. (1979). *Correspondence education in the light of a number of contemporary teaching models*. Malmo: Liber Hermods.
- Baath, J. A. (1980). *Postal two-way communication in correspondence education*. Lund: Gleerup.
- Baath, J. A. (1981). On the nature of distance education. *Distance Education*, 2(2), 212-219.
- Baath, J. A. (1982). Distance students' learning - empirical findings and theoretical deliberations. *Distance Education*, 3(1), 6-27.
- Baath, J. A. (1983). Theoretical models for planning correspondence courses. *Epistolodidaktika*, 1, 15-33.
- Baath, J. A. (1984). Pride and prejudice among distance education. *ICDE Bulletin*, 5, 70-73.



- Baath, J. A. (1988). A list of ideas for the construction of distance education courses. In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International perspectives* (pp. 272-290). London: Routledge.
- Barker, B., Frisbie, A., & Patrick, K. (1989). Broadening the definition of distance education in the light of new telecommunications technologies. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 3(1), 20-29.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bassey, M. (1995). *Creating education through research: A global perspective of educational research for the 21st century*. Newark: Kirklington Moor Press in conjunction with the British Education Research Association.
- Becker, H. S., Geer, B., & Hughes, E. C. (1968). *Making the grade: The academic side of college life*. New York: Wiley.
- Berry, J. W. (1981, 13-16 December). *Comparative studies of cognitive styles: Implications for the education of immigrant students*. Paper presented at the Conference on the Education of Ethnic Minorities and Immigrants, Miami.
- Bialystok, E., & Fröhlich, M. (1977). Aspects of second language learning in classroom setting. *Working papers in Bilingualism*, 13, 1-26.
- Bickerton, D. (1981). *Roots of language*. Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers.
- Biggs, J. (1979). Individual differences in study processes and the quality of learning. *Higher Education*, 8, 381-394.
- Biggs, J. (1996). Western misconceptions of the Confucian-heritage learning culture. In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*. Melbourne and Hong Kong: Australian Council for Educational Research and the Comparative Educational Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.
- Biggs, J. B. (1970). Personality correlates of certain dimensions of study behaviour. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 22, 287-297.
- Birch, H. G., & Lefford, A. (1963). Intersensory development in children. *Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 28 (5, Serial No. 89).
- Birch, H. G., & Lefford, A. (1967). Visual differentiation, inter sensory integration, and voluntary motor control. *Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 32 (2, Serial No. 110).
- Bissell, J., White, S., & Zivin, G. (1971). Sensory modalities in children's learning. In G. S. Lesser (Ed.), *Psychology and educational practice*. Glenview: Scotland, Forestman.
- Boudourides, M. A. (1998). *Constructivism and education: A shopper's guide*. <http://www.duth.gr/~mboudour/mab/constr.html> [1999, 18 august].

- Brannan, J. (1992). Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches: An overview. In J. Brannan (Ed.), *Mixing methods: Qualitative and quantitative research* (pp. 3-37). Hampshire: Avebury.
- Brennan, J. L., & Percy, K. A. (1977). What do students want? An analysis of staff and student perceptions in British Higher Education. In A. Bonboir (Ed.), *Instructional design in Higher Education* (Vol. 1, pp. 125-152): European Association for Research and Development in Higher Education.
- Brookfield, S. (Ed.). (1985). *Self-directed learning: From theory to practice (New directions for continuing education)*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Brown, H. D. (1987). *Principles of language learning and teaching*, (2nd edn.) Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Bruner, J. S. (1960). *The process of education*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. S. (1966). *Towards a theory of instruction*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. S., Goodnow, J. J., & Austin, G. A. (1956). *A study of thinking*. New York: Wiley.
- Bruner, J. S., Olver, R. R., & Greenfield, P. M. (1966). *Studies in cognitive growth*. New York: Wiley.
- Bruner, J. S., & Tajfel, H. (1961). Cognitive risk and environmental change. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 62, 231-241.
- Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and quality in social research*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Bryman, A. (1992). Quantitative and qualitative research: Further reflections on their integration. In J. Brannan (Ed.), *Mixing methods: Qualitative and quantitative research* (pp. 57-78). Hampshire: Avebury.
- Burgess, R. G. (1982). Multiple strategies in field research. In R. G. Birgess (Ed.), *Field research: A sourcebook and field manual*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Burgess, R. G. (1984). *In the field: An introduction to field research*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Busch, D. (1982). Introversion-extroversion and the EFL proficiency of Japanese students. *Language Learning*, 32(1).
- Cameron, K. (1999). *CALL and the learning community*. Exeter: Elm Bank Publications.
- Carroll, J., & Sapon, S. M. (1959). *Modern language aptitude test*. New York: Psychological Corporation.
- Carver, D. J. (1982). Introduction to 'The selection and training of helpers'. In W. D. Cousin (Ed.), *Report of the workshops on the role and training of helpers for self-access language learning systems*. Moray house (mimeo).



- Cattell, R. B. (1966). The Scree Test for the number of factors. *Multivariate Behavioural Research*, 1, 245-276.
- Chan, C. H. (1977). *Education and nation building in plural societies: The West Malaysian experience*. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second language classroom: Research on teaching and learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheng, M. H., & Banya, K. (1998). Bridging the gap between teaching styles and learning styles. In J. Reid (Ed.), *Understanding learning styles in the second language classroom*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Chomsky, N. (1959). Review of verbal behavior by B.F. Skinner. *Language*, 35, 26-58.
- Clarke, R. M. (1986). 'Students' approaches to learning in an innovative medical school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 56, 309-321.
- Claxton, C., & Murrell, P. (1987). *Learning styles: Implications for improving educational practices*. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education.
- Coath, M. (1987). Distance teaching for management development in Hungary. In V. E. e. a. Hodgson (Ed.), *Beyond distance teaching - Towards open learning*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Coggins, C. (1986). Wisconsin conference report - Effective teaching at a distance. *Open Learning, February*, 49-52.
- Cohen, A. D. (1983). Reformulating compositions. *TESOL Newsletter*, 17, 1-5.
- Cohen, A. D., & Aphek, E. (1981). Easifying second language learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 3(221-236).
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1992). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Corder, S. P. (1971). Idiosyncratic dialects and error analysis. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 9, 147-159.
- Cotterall, S. (1995). Developing a course strategy for learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 49(3), 219-227.
- Cross, D. (1980). *Personalised language learning*. Altman and James.
- Curry, L. (1983). *An organisation of learning styles theory and construct*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec (ERIC Doc. No. ED 235185).
- Dahlgren, L. O. (1978). *Qualitative differences in conceptions of basic principles in economics*. Paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Higher Education, Lancaster.
- Dahlgren, L. O., & Marton, F. (1978). Students' conceptions of subject matter: An aspect of learning and teaching in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 3, 25-35.

- Daniel, J. (1999). *Distance learning in the era of networks: What are the key technologies?* Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. (<http://www.col.org/forum/daniel.html>).
- Daniel, J., & Marquis, C. (1979). Interaction and Independence: Getting the mixture right. *Teaching at a Distance*, 15, 25-44.
- Daniel, J., & Shale, D. (1979). *The role of pacing in a distance education system*. Paper presented at the Open University Conference on the Education of Adults at a Distance, paper No. 9, Milton Keynes.
- Darkenwald, G. G., & Merriam, S. B. (1982). *Adult education: Foundations of practice*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Das, J., Cummins, J., Kirby, J., & Jarman, R. (1979). Simultaneous and successive processes, language and mental abilities. *Canadian Psychological Review*, 20(1).
- Das, K. (1982, January 22.). The bahasa backlash. *Far Eastern Economic Review*.
- Dasuki, K. A. (1993). *Konsep dan sistem pendidikan jarak jauh (Concept and system of distance education)*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Delling, R. M. (1966). Versuch der Grundlegung zu einer systematischen Theorie des Fernunterrichts. In L. Sroka (Ed.), *Fernunterricht 1966, Festschrift zum 50. Geburtstag von Walter Schultz-Rahe*. Hamburg: Hamburger Fernlehrinstitut.
- Denzin, N. (1970). *The research act in sociology*. London: Butterworth.
- Dhanarajan, G. (1990). Universities Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. In B. N. Koul & J. Jenkins (Eds.), *Distance education: A spectrum of case studies* (pp. 79-96). London: Kogan Page Ltd. in association with the International Extension College.
- Dhanarajan, G. (1998). *Educational Broadcasting: Challenges of shifting paradigms.* PanCommowealth Forum on Open Learning. (<http://w.w.w.col.org/speeches/sabc98.html>).
- Dickinson, L. (1980). *Reports of workshops in self-directed language learning.* Moray House (mimeo).
- Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-instruction in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dickinson, L. (1988). Learning training. In A. Brookes & P. Grundy (Eds.), *Individualisation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 45-53). London: Modern English Publications in association with the British Council.
- Dickinson, L. (1992). *Learner Autonomy 2: Learner training for language learning*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Dickinson, L., & Carver, D. (1980). Learning how to learn. *English Language Teaching Journal*, XXXV(1), 1-6.



- DiVesta, F. J., & L.P., R. (1987). Characteristics of cognitive engineering: The next generation of instructional systems. *Education Communication and Technology Journal*, 35(4), 213-230.
- Dohmen, G. (1967). *Das Fernstudium. Ein neues pädagogisches Forschungs-und Arbeitsfeld*. Tübingen: DIFF.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, England: Education Ltd.
- Dornyei, Z., & Clement, R. (2000, March). *Motivational characteristics of learning different target languages: Results of a nation-wide survey*. Paper presented at the AAAL convention, Vancouver, Canada.
- Dubois, B., & Burns, J. A. (1975). An analysis of the question mark response category in attitudinal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 35, 869-884.
- Dunn, R. (1975). *Learning style inventory*. Lawrence, Kansas: Price Systems.
- Dunn, R. (1983). Learning style and its relation to exceptionality at both ends of the spectrum. *Exceptional Children*, 49, 496-506.
- Dunn, R. (1984). Learning style: State of the scene. *Theory Into Practice*, 23, 10-19.
- Ehrman, M. E. (1996). *Understanding second language learning difficulties: Looking beneath the surface*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ehrman, M. E. (1998). Field independence, field dependence, and field sensitivity in another light. In J. Reid (Ed.), *Understanding learning styles in the second language classroom* (pp. 62-70). New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Eliason, P. A. (1995). Difficulties with cross-cultural learning-styles assessment. In J. M. Reid (Ed.), *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom* (pp. 19-33). Boston, Mass: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989a). *Learning to learn English: A course in learner training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989b). *Learning to learn English - A course in learner training - Learners' book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989c). *Learning to learn English - A course in learner training - teachers' book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Entwistle, N. J., & Entwistle, D. M. (1970). The relationships between personality, study methods and academic performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 40, 132-141.
- Entwistle, N. J., Hanley, M., & Hounsell, D. J. (1979). Identifying distinctive approaches to studying. *Higher Education*, 8, 365-380.
- Entwistle, N. J., Hanley, M., & Ratcliffe, G. (1979). Approaches to learning and levels of understanding. *British Journal of Educational Research*, 5, 99-114.

- Entwistle, N. J., & Percy, K. A. (1971). Educational objectives and student performance within the binary system, *Research into Higher Education*. London: S.R.H.E.
- Entwistle, N. J., & Ramsden, P. (1983). *Understanding student learning*. London: Croom Helm Ltd.
- Entwistle, N. J., Thompson, J. B., & Wilson, J. D. (1974). Motivation and study habits. *Higher Education*, 3, 379-396.
- Entwistle, N. J., & Wilson, J. (1977). *Degree of excellence*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Entwistle, N. J., & Wilson, J. D. (1970). Personality, study methods and academic performance. *University Quarterly*, 21, 147-166.
- Entwistle, N. J., & Tait, H. (1994). *The revised approach to studying inventory*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh: Centre for Research into Learning and Instruction.
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Esch, E. (Ed.). (1994). *Self-access and the adult language learner*. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching.
- Eysenck, H. J. (1970). *The structure of human personality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Eysenck, M. W., & Piper, D. W. (1987). A word is worth a thousand pictures. In J. T. E. Richardson & M. W. Eysenck & D. W. Piper (Eds.), *Student Learning: Research in education and cognitive psychology* (pp. 208-220). Milton Keynes: SHRE and Open University Press.
- Fage, J. (1987). Foundation studies counselling and teaching - a case study illuminating the practice of integrated teaching and counselling for new learners. In M. Thorpe & D. Grugeon (Eds.), *Open learning for adults*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Farnham, D. (Ed.). (1999). *Managing academic staff in changing university system: International trends and comparisons*. Buckingham: SHRE and Open University Press.
- Fearn-Wannan, H. (1979, December). *Students' perceptions of lecturers as determinants of academic performance in first-year chemistry*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the S.R.H.E., Brighton.
- Fernandez. (1997, 4th February). All to be made 'smart schools' by 2010, says Najib. *The Star*, p. 4.
- Ferro, T. R. (1993). The influence of affective processing in education and training. In D. D. Flannery (Ed.), *Applying cognitive learning theory to adult learning* (pp. 25-33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Fielding, N. G., & Fielding, J. L. (1986). *Linking data: Qualitative research network series 4*. London: Sage.
- Flinck, R. (1978). *Correspondence education combined with systematic telephone tutoring*. Lund: Hermods.



- Fransson, A. (1977). On qualitative differences in learning. IV - Effects of motivation and test anxiety on process and outcome. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 47, 244-257.
- Gaff, J. G., Crombag, H. F. M., & Chang, T. M. (1976). Environments for learning in a Dutch university. *Higher Education*, 5, 285-299.
- Gagne, R. M. (1965). *The conditions of learning*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Gamson, Z. F. (1966). Utilitarian and normative orientations toward education. *Sociology of Education*, 39, 46-73.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *The social psychology of language 4*. London: Edward Arnold (Publisher) Ltd.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1985). *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House Publishers.
- Garger, S., & Guild, P. (1984). Learning styles: The crucial differences. *Curriculum Review*, 23, 9-12.
- Garrison, D., & Shale, D. (1987). Mapping the boundaries of distance education: Problems in defining the field. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 1(1), 4-13.
- Garrison, D. R. (1989). *Understanding distance education*. London: Routledge.
- Garrison, D. R. (1993a). A cognitive constructivist view of distance education: An analysis of teaching-learning assumptions. *Distance Education*, 14(2), 199-211.
- Garrison, D. R. (1993b). Quality and access in distance education: Theoretical considerations. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 9-21). London: Routledge.
- Geddes, M., & McAlpin, J. (1978). Activity options in language courses. *British Council*, 1978, 29-36.
- Geddes, M., & Sturtridge, G. (1982). *Individualisation*. Modern English Publications.
- Genesee, F., & Hamayan, E. (1980). Individual differences in second language learning. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 1, 95-110.
- Gibbs, G. (1981). *Teaching students to learn: A student-centred approach.*: Open University Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. New York: Aldine.
- Glaserfeld, E. v. (1984). An introduction to radical constructivism. In P. Watzlawick (Ed.), *The invented reality* (pp. 84-103). London: W.W. Naughton & Co.
- Glaserfeld, E. v. (1987). Learning as a constructive activity. In C. Janvier (Ed.), *Problems of representation in the teaching and learning of mathematics* (pp. 54-75). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Glaserfeld, E. v. (1990). An exposition on constructivism: Why some like it radical. In Davis & Maher & Noddings (Eds.), *Constructivist views on the teaching and learning of mathematics* (pp. 21-33). Reston, Virginia: JRME Monograph.
- Gow, L., Balla, J., Kember, D., & Hau, K. T. (1996). Learning approaches of Chinese people: A function of socialisation processes and the context of learning? In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The handbook of Chinese psychology*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Gow, L., & Kember, D. (1993). Conceptions of teaching and their relationship to student learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 63, 20-33.
- Greenberg, J. H. (Ed.). (1963). *Universals of language*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press.
- Greenberg, J. H. (Ed.). (1966). *Language universals*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.
- Gremmo, M., & Riley, P. (1995). Autonomy, self-direction and self-access in language teaching and learning: The history of an idea. In N. F. Davies (Ed.), *System* (pp. 151-164). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Gross, R. (1979). *The lifelong learner*. Simon and Schuster.
- Grotjahn, R. (1987). On the methodological basis of introspective methods. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Introspection in second language research*. Clevedon Avon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Guiora, A., Brannon, R., & Dull, C. (1972). Empathy and second language learning. *Language Learning*, 22(1).
- Guio, A. e. a. (1972). The effects of experimentally induced changes in ego states on pronunciation in a second language: An exploratory study. *Comprehensive Psychology*, 13.
- Gullick, J. (1971). *Malaysia: Economic expansion and national unity*. London: Ernest Benn.
- Hamachek, D. E. (1977). Humanistic psychology: Theoretical-philosophical framework and implications for teaching. In D. J. Treffinger & J. Davies & R. E. Ripple (Eds.), *Handbook on teaching educational psychology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Harding-Esch, E. (1982). The open access sound and video library of the University of Cambridge: Progress report and development. *System*, 13-28.
- Hardy, & Taylor. (1997). Von Glasersfeld's radical constructivism: A critical review. *Science and education*, 6, 135-150.
- Harnett, D. (1981, April 16). *The relations of analytical and holistic cognitive styles to second language instructional methods*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles.
- Harper, G., & Kember, D. (1986). Approaches to study of distance education students. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 17(3), 212-222.



- Harper, G., & Kember, D. (1989). Interpretation of factor analysis from the approaches to studying inventory. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 59, 66-74.
- Hartmann, E. (1991). *Boundaries in the mind: A new psychology of personality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Harun, H. (1993). *Permintaan dan amalan dalam memenuhi permintaan terhadap pendidikan (Demand and practice in fulfilling demand for education)*. Paper presented at the Conference on Distance Education, USM, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.
- Hashim, Y., & Alsagoff, S. A. (1999). *Pendidikan jarak jauh: Teori dan amalan (Distance education: Theories and practices)*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Hassan, Z. (1994). *Wawasan 2020: Huraian 9 cabaran (Vision 2020: Description of the 9 challenges)*. Shah Alam, Malaysia: Penerbitan Pewarna.
- Heath, R. (1964). *The reasonable adventurer*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hendrickson, J. M. (1980). Listening and speaking activities for foreign language learners. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 36, 735-748.
- Hendrickson, J. M. (1983). Listening and speaking activities for foreign language learners: second collection. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 39, 267-284.
- Heron, J. (1981). *Assessment revisited*. Boud.
- Hess, R. D., & Azuma, M. (1991). Cultural support for schooling: Contrasts between Japan and United States. *Educational Research*, 20(9), 2-8.
- Hiola, Y. (1988). *Investing face-to-face tutorial provision in the Universitas Terbuka of Indonesia*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cardiff University.
- Hiola, Y., & Moss, D. (1990). Characteristics of distance learners at the Universitas Terbuka (Open University) Indonesia. *Distance Education*, 11(1), 116-124.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind*. Maidenhead, England: Mc-Graw Hill Book Company.
- Holec, H. (1980). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Holec, H. (1994). *Self-directed learning: An alternative form of training*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Holmberg, B. (1977). *Distance education: A survey and bibliography*. London: Kogan Page.
- Holmberg, B. (1985). Teaching foreign language at a distance. *Distance Education*, 6(1), 79-91.
- Holmberg, B. (1986). *Growth and structure of distance education*. Beckenham: Croom Helm.

- Holmberg, B. (1988). Guided didactic conversation in distance education. In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International perspectives* (pp. 114-122). London: Routledge.
- Holmberg, B. (1995). *Theory and practice of distance education*. London: Routledge.
- Holmberg, B. (1997). Distance-education theory again. *Open Learning*, 31-39.
- Houle, C. O. (1961). *The inquiring mind*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Houle, C. O. (1972). *The design of education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.
- James, W. B., & Gardner, D. L. (1995). Learning styles: Implications for distance learners. In Rossman & Rossman (Ed.), *Facilitating distance education* (pp. 19-31). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Jarvis, P. (1995). *Adult and continuing education: Theory and practice*, (2nd edn.) Routledge.
- Jarvis, P., Holford, J., & Griffin, C. (1998). *The theory and practice of learning*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Jenkins, J. (1981). *Materials for learning: How to teach adults at a distance*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Kachru, B. B. (1977). New Englishes and old models. *English Language Forum*(July).
- Kahl, T. N., & Cropley, A. J. (1986). Face-to-face versus distance learning: Psychological consequences and practical implications. *Distance Education*, 7(1), 38-48.
- Keefe, J. W. (1987). *Learning style theory and practice*. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Keegan, D. (1986). *Foundations of distance education*. London: Croom Helm.
- Keegan, D. (1988). On defining distance education. In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International perspectives* (pp. 6-33). London: Routledge.
- Keegan, D. (1990a). A theory for distance education. In M. G. Moore (Ed.), *Contemporary issues in American Distance education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Keegan, D. (1990b). *Foundations of distance education*, (2nd edn.) London: Routledge.
- Keegan, D. (1993). Reintegration of the teaching acts. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 113-134). London: Routledge.
- Keegan, D. (1996). *Foundations of distance education*, (3rd edn.) London: Routledge.
- Kelly, G. (1955). *The psychology of personal constructs* (Vol. Norton): New York.
- Kelly, P., & Swift, B. (1983). Post-foundation tuition: Learner perspectives. *Teaching at a distance*, 24, 35-41.



- Kember, D. (1996). The intention to both memorise and understand: Another approach to learning? *Higher Education*, 31, 341-351.
- Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching. *Learning and Instruction*, 7(3), 255-275.
- Kember, D. (2000). Misconceptions about the learning approaches, motivation and study practices of Asian students. *Higher Education*, 40, 99-121.
- Kember, D., & Gow, L. (1990). Cultural specificity of approaches to study. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 60, 356-363.
- Kember, D., & Gow, L. (1992). Action research as a form of staff development in higher education. *Higher Education*, 23(3), 297-310.
- Kember, D., & Gow, L. (1994). Orientations to teaching and their effect on the quality of student learning. *Journal of Higher Education*, 65(1), 58-74.
- Kember, D., & Harper, G. (1987). Implications for instruction arising from the relationship between approaches to studying and academic outcomes. *Instructional Science*, 16, 35-46.
- Kember, D., Lam, B. H., Yum, J. C. K., & Liu, S. B. (1997). *Case studies of improving teaching and learning from the action learning project*. Hong Kong: Action Learning project.
- Kember, D., & McKay, J. (1996). Action research into the quality of student learning: A paradigm for faculty development. *Journal of Higher Education*, 65(5), 528-554.
- Kember, D., & Wong, A. (2000). Implications for evaluation from a study of students' perceptions of good and poor teaching. *Higher Education*, 40, 69-97.
- Kember, D., Wong, A., & Leung, D. Y. P. (1999). Reconsidering the dimensions of approaches to learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69, 323-343.
- Kim, J., & Mueller, C. W. (1978). *Factor analysis: Statistical methods and practical issues*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Kinsella, K. (1995). Understanding and empowering diverse learners in the ESL classroom. In J. M. Reid (Ed.), *Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL classroom* (1st ed., pp. 170-194). Mass: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. New York: Association Press.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*, (Revisited and updated edn.) Chicago: Association Press. Follett Publishing Co.
- Knowles, M. S. (1989). *The adult learner: A neglected species*. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner*. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Company.

- Kolb, D. (1976). *Learning style inventory*. Boston: McBer.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implication*. London: Longman.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Kulik, J. A., & Mckeachie, W. J. (1975). The evaluation of teachers in higher education. In F. N. Kerlinger (Ed.), *Review of research education 3*. Itasca, Ill.: Peacock Publishers.
- Lado, R. (1964). *Language teaching: A scientific approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Laidin, A. Z. (1997, 11-14 November 1997). *Quality human resources: Impetus for quality distance education*. Paper presented at the 11th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the Asian Association of Open Universities, Kuala Lumpur.
- Lambert, M. P. (1983). *New course planning. The strategy and tactics of developing a home study course, NHSC News*. Washington: National Home Study Council.
- Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Language, Psychology and Culture: Essays by Wallace E. Lambert*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Laurillard, D. (1987). The different forms of learning in psychology and education. In J. T. E. Richardson & M. W. Eysenck & D. W. Piper (Eds.), *Student Learning: Research in education and cognitive psychology* (pp. 198-207). Milton Keynes: SHRE and Open University Press.
- Laurillard, D. M. (1978). *A study of the relationship between some of the cognitive and contextual factors involved in student learning*. Unpublished Ph.D. University of Surrey, Surrey.
- Layder, D. (1988). The relation of theory and method: Casual relatedness, historical contingency and beyond. *Sociological Review*, 36(3), 441-463.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned*, (Revised edn.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Liosa, E. (1992). Distance education in a modern society. *Open Learning*, June, 23-30.
- Little, D. (Ed.). (1988). *Self-access systems for language learning*. Dublin: TCD, Authentik.
- Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy: Definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin: Authentik language learning Resources Ltd.
- Logan, G. E. (1980). *Individualised foreign language instruction: American patterns for accommodating learner differences in the classroom*. Altman and James.
- Loh, P. F. S. (1975). *Seeds of separatism: Educational policy in Malaysia. 1874-1940*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Lourdusamy, A., Ghani, Z., Dhanarajan, G., Fong, P. C., & Kee, L. E. (1990). *Off-campus students characteristics (Malaysia) and their relationship to academic achievement*. Penang: Centre for Off Campus Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia.



- Lukmani, Y. (1972). Motivation to learn and language proficiency. *Language Learning*, 22, 261-274.
- Malaysia. (1956). *The Razak Report*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.
- Malaysia. (1971). *Second Malaysia Plan, 1996-2000*. Kuala Lumpur: National Printing Department.
- Malaysia. (1973). *Laporan Keciciran (Report on dropouts)*. Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Malaysia. (1976). *Third Malaysia Plan, 1976-1980*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Press.
- Malaysia. (1989). *KBSM Huraian sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris (Tingkatan IV) [The KBSM English Language Syllabus for Form IV]*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Malaysia. (1989). *Kurikulum bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM): Huraian sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris (Tingkatan IV) [Description of the KBSM English Language syllabus (Form IV)]*. Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Malaysia. (1991). *The way forward (Vision 2020)*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Malaysia. (1997). *Information Malaysia Yearbook*. Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing.
- Malaysia. (1997). *Sekolah Bestari di Malaysia: Suatu lonjakan saujana (Smart Schools in Malaysia: a quantum leap)*. Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Teknologi Pendidikan.
- Malhorta, N. K. (1996). *Marketing research: An applied orientation (2nd Edition)*. New York: Prentice Hall International.
- Marton, F. (1975). *On non-verbatim learning II -- The erosion effect of a task-induced learning algorithm.*: Reports from the Institute of Education, University of Gothenburg, No. 40.
- Marton, F. (1976). What does it take to learn? Some implications of an alternative view of learning. In N. J. Entwistle (Ed.), *Strategies for research and development in higher education*. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Marton, F., Dall'Alba, G., & Beaty, E. (1993). Conceptions of learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 19, 277-300.
- Marton, F., Dall'Alba, G., & Kun, T. L. (1996). Memorising and understanding: The keys to the paradox? In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*. Melbourne and Hong Kong: Australian Council for Educational Research and the comparative education research centre, University of Hong Kong.
- Marton, F., & Saljo, R. (1976a). On quantitative differences in learning I - Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46, 4-11.
- Marton, F., & Saljo, R. (1976b). On quantitative differences in learning II - Outcome as a function of the learner's conception of the task. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46, 115-127.

- Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Towards a psychology of being*, (2nd edn.) New York: Van Nostrand.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality*, (2nd edn.) New York: Harper and Row.
- McCafferty, J. B. (1982). Self-access: Problems and proposals. In D. J. Carver & L. Dickinson (Eds.), *Self-directed learning. Collected papers in self-directed learning in English Language learning*. Moray House (mimeo).
- McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of second language learning*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd.
- Md. Razali, M. R., & Md. Yassin, A. A. (1995, 30 May 1995). *Towards a mass higher education in Malaysia: Some important issues to resolve*. Paper presented at the ASAIHL National Conference, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.
- Messick, S. (1976). Personality consistencies in cognition and creativity. In Messick & associates (Ed.), *Individuality in learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, J. H. F. (1988). Student perceptions of learning context and approaches to studying. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 2, 73-82.
- Meyer, J. H. F., & Dunne, T. T. (1991). Study approaches of nursing students: Effects of an extended clinical context. *Medical Education*, 25, 497-516.
- Meyer, J. H. F., & Parsons, P. (1989). Approaches to studying and course perceptions using the Lancaster Inventory: A comparative study. *Studies in Higher Education*, 14(137-153).
- Miller, C. D. (1990). Learning approaches and motives: Male and Female differences and implications for learning assistance programs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 31, 147-154.
- Miller, C. M. L., & Parlett, M. (1974). *Up to the mark: A study of the examination game*. London: S.R.H.E.
- Mohamed, O. B. (1973). Education and social interaction in Malaysia. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 34/05-A, 2463.
- Mohammed, N. (1999). *The effectiveness of the distance education programme in MARA Institute of Technology*. Cardiff University, Cardiff.
- Moore, M. G. (1972). Learner autonomy: The second dimension of independence learning. *Convergence*, 5(2), 76-88.
- Moore, M. G. (1973). Towards a theory of independent learning and teaching. *Journal of Higher Education*, 44, 666-679.
- Moore, M. G. (1976). *Investigation of the interaction between the cognitive style of field independence and attitudes to independent study among adults who use correspondence independent study and self-directed independent study*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation in Dissertation Abstract International 37/06,3344A, University of Wisconsin.



- Moore, M. G. (1983). The individual adult learner. In M. Tight (Ed.), *Education for adults, volume 1: Adult learning and education*. London: Croom Helm.
- Moore, M. G. (1988). On a theory of independent study. In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International Perspectives* (pp. 68-94). London: Routledge.
- Moore, M. G. (1990). Recent contributions to the theory of distance education. *Open Learning*, 5(3), 10-15.
- Moore, M. G. (1991). Editorial: Distance education theory. *The American Journal of distance education*, 5(3), 1-6.
- Moore, M. G. (1993). Theory of Transactional distance. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 22-38). London: Routledge.
- Morgan, A., & Gibbs, G. (1980). *Students' approaches to studying. The social Science and Technology foundation courses: Preliminary studies*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
- Morgan, A., Gibbs, G., & Taylor, E. (1980). *Students' approaches to studying. The Social Science and Technology foundation courses: Preliminary studies* (Study Methods Group Reports IET-SMG-4). Milton Keynes: The Open University.
- Moulden, H. (1982a). The need for helpers and their roles at different language learning levels. *Cousin*, 20-27.
- Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Myers, I. B., & McCaulley, M. (1985). *Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs type indicator*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists.
- Naiman, N., Fröhlich, M., Stern, H. H., & Todesco, A. (1975, 1978). *The good language learner*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Nelson, G. L. (1995). Cultural differences in learning styles. In J. M. Reid (Ed.), *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom* (pp. 3-18). Boston, Mass: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Nemser, W. (1971). Approximative systems of foreign language learners. *International review of Applied Linguistics*, 9, 115-123.
- Newman, I., & Benz, C. R. (1998). *Qualitative and quantitative research methodology: Exploring the interactive continuum*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Newman, J. H. (1852). *On the scope and nature of university education*. London: Kent.
- Nie, N. J., Hull, C. H., Jenkins, J. G., Steinbrenner, K., & Bent, D. H. (1975). *Statistical package for the social sciences (2nd Edition)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*, (2nd edn.) New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ochoa, M. L. (1979). *Some basic issues on implementing a distance education system*. Paper presented at the Open University's Tenth Anniversary International Conference.
- Oller, J. W. (1979). *Language test in school: A pragmatic approach*. London: Longman.
- Oskarsson, M. (1984). *Self-assessment of foreign language skills. A survey of research and development work*. University of Goteborg (mimeo).
- Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Oxford, R., Young, P., Sukero, I., & Sumrall, M. (1993). Japanese by satellite: Effects of motivation, language learning styles and strategies, gender, course level, and previous language learning experience on Japanese language achievement. *Foreign Language Annals*, 26(3), 359-371.
- Oxford, R. L., & Burry-Stock, J. A. (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies world-wide with the ESL/EFL version of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). *System*, 23(1), 1-23.
- Parsons, P. (1988). The Lancaster Approaches to Studying Inventory and Course Perceptions Questionnaire: A replicated study at the Cape Technikon. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 2, 103-111.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1977). Patterns of student-faculty informal interaction beyond the classroom and voluntary freshman attrition. *Journal of Higher Education*, 48, 540-552.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1978). Student-faculty informal relationships and freshman year education outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research*, 71, 183-189.
- Pask, G. (1976). Conversational techniques in the study and practice of education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46, 12-25.
- Pask, G. (1976). Styles and strategies of learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46.
- Pask, G., & Scott, B. C. E. (1972). Learning strategies and individual competence. *International Journal of Man-machine Studies*, 4, 217-253.
- Pask, G. et al. (1977). *Third progress report on SSRC research programme HR 2708*. Surrey: System Research Limited.
- Pattison, M. (1876). Philosophy at Oxford. *Mind*, 1, 84-97.
- Patton, M. Q. (1987). *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.



- Payne, D. A., & Hobbs, A. M. (1979). The effect of college course evaluation feedback on instructor and student perceptions of instructional climate and effectiveness. *Higher Education*, 8, 525-533.
- Percy, K. A., & Ramsden, P. (1980). *Independent study: Two examples from English Higher Education*. Guildford: S.R.H.E.
- Perry, W. G. (1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A Scheme*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Peters, O. (1973). *Die didaktische Struktur des Fernunterrichts*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Peters, O. (1988). Distance teaching and industrial production: A comparative interpretation in outline. In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International Perspective* (pp. 95-113). London: Routledge.
- Peters, O. (1993). Distance education in a post-industrial society. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 39-58). London: Routledge.
- Peters, O. (1994). *Otto Peters on distance education: The industrialisation of teaching and learning*. London: Routledge.
- Peters, O. (1998). *Learning and teaching in distance education*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Philips, S. U. (1983). *The invisible culture: Communication in classroom and community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation*. New York: Longman.
- Piaget, J. (1966). *The origins of intelligence in children*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Piaget, J. (1972). *Principles of geneticepistemology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Piaget, J. (1974). *To understand is to invent*. New York: Viking Press.
- Pillay, H. (1995). *Fragments of vision: A case study of the implementation of an English Language curriculum programme in five Malaysian secondary schools*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia.
- Pillay, H. (1998). *Issues in the teaching of English in Malaysia*.: The English Teacher Online. (<http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt/98/nov/pillay.html>).
- Pirsig, R. M. (1974). *Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance*.: Corgi.
- Portway, P., & Lane, C. (1994). *Guide to Teleconferencing and Distance Learning*. San Ramon CA: Applied Business Communications.
- Prosser, M., & Trigwell, K. (1998). Teaching in higher education. In B. Dart & G. Boulton-Lewis (Eds.) *Teaching and learning in higher education*. Victoria: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Prosser, M., & Trigwell, K. (1999). *Understanding learning and teaching: The experience of higher education*. Philadelphia: Society for Research into Higher Education.

- Putra, A. A. M. S. (1993). *Students persists and dropout from Universiti Terbuka (The Open University of Indonesia)*. Unpublished Master thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.
- Race, P. (1989). *The open learning handbook. Selecting, designing and supporting open learning materials*. London: Kogan Page.
- Ramsden, P. (1979). Student learning and perceptions of the academic environment. *Higher Education*, 8, 411-428.
- Ramsden, P. (1981). *A study of the relationship between student learning and its academic context*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster.
- Ramsden, P. (1983). *The Lancaster Approach to study inventory and course perceptions questionnaire: Lecturer handbook*. Lancaster: Educational Methods Unit.
- Ramsden, P. (1988). Studying learning: Improving teaching. In P. Ramsden (Ed.), *Improving learning: New perspectives* (pp. 13-31). London: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Ramsden, P., & Entwistle, N. J. (1981). Effects of academic departments on students' approaches to studying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51, 368-383.
- Reichardt, C., & Cook, T. (1979). Beyond Qualitative versus quantitative methods. In T. Cook & C. Reichardt (Eds.), *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reid, J., Mata Vicioso, M. V., Gedeon, E., Takacs, K., & Korotkikh, Z. (1998). Teachers as perceptual learning styles researchers. In J. Reid (Ed.), *Understanding learning styles in the second language classroom* (pp. 15-26). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Reid, J. M. (1987). The learning styles preferences of ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(1), 87-111.
- Reid, J. M. (Ed.). (1995). *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Mass: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Reid, J. M. (Ed.). (1998). *Understanding learning styles in the second language classroom*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richardson, J. T. E. (1987). Research in education and cognitive psychology. In J. T. E. Richardson & M. W. Eysenck & D. W. Piper (Eds.), *Student Learning: Research in education and cognitive psychology* (pp. 3-12). Milton Keynes: SHRE and Open University Press.
- Richardson, J. T. E. (1994a). Cultural specificity of approaches to studying in higher education: A literature survey. *Higher Education*, 27, 449-468.
- Richardson, J. T. E. (1994b). Mature students in higher education: A literature survey on approaches to studying. *Studies in Higher Education*, 19, 309-325.



- Richardson, J. T. E., Morgan, A., & Woodley, A. (1999). Approaches to studying in distance education. *Higher Education*, 37, 23-55.
- Riley, P. (1980). *Learner exercise and self-assessment techniques*. CRAPEL (mimeo).
- Riley, P. (1981). Pedagogical implications of the use of authentic documents. *CRAPEL* (mimeo).
- Riley, P. (Ed.). (1986). *Discourse and learning*. London: Longman.
- Riley, P., & Zoppis, C. (1976). The sound and video library. An interim report on an experiment. *Mélanges Pédagogiques*, 125-143.
- Roberts, D., Boyton, B., Buete, S., & Dawson, D. (1991). Applying Kember's linear-process model to distance education at Charles Sturt University - Riverina. *Distance Education*, 12(1), 54-84.
- Roberts, R. (1975). The session libre. *Audio Visual Language Journal*, 13, 3-11.
- Roe, A. (1951). A study of imagery in research scientists. *Journal of Personality*, 19, 459-470.
- Roe, A. (1953). *The making of the scientist*. New York: Dodd, Mead.
- Roe, A. (1956). *The psychology of occupations*. New York: Wiley.
- Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.
- Rogers, C. R. (1982). *Freedom to learn for the 80s*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill.
- Rowntree, D. (1992). *Exploring open and distance learning*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Rubenson, K. (1986). Distance education for adults: Old and new barriers for participation. In G. van Enckovert & K. Harry & P. Morin & H. G. Schutze (Eds.), *Distance education and the adult learner: Innovations in distance education. Occasional papers of the Dutch Open University*. Heerlen: The Dutch Open University.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the 'Good Language Learner' can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41-51.
- Rubin, J. (1981). Study of cognitive processes in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 117-131.
- Rumble, G. (1988). Animadversions upon the concepts of distance education as a discipline. *Journal of Distance Education/Revue de l'enseignement à distance*, 3(1), 39-56.
- Salili, F. (1996). Accepting personal responsibility for learning. In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*. Melbourne and Hong Kong: Australian Council Educational Research and the Comparative Educational Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.
- Saljo, R. (1975). *Qualitative differences in learning as a function of the learner's conception of the task*. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothburgensis.

- Saljo, R. (1979a). *Learning in the learner perspective: I - Some common-sense conceptions*, 76: Reports from the Institute of Education, University of Gothenburg, No. 76.
- Saljo, R. (1979b). *Learning in the learner's perspective: II - differences in awareness*.: Reports from the Institute of Education, University of Gothenburg, No. 77.
- Saljo, R. (1979c). Learning about learning. *Higher Education*, 8, 443-451.
- Schmeck, R. R., Ribich, F., & Ramanaiah, N. (1977). Development of a self-report inventory for assessing individual differences in learning processes. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 1, 413-431.
- Scott, M., Carioni, L., Zanatta, M., Bayer, E., & Quintanilha, T. (1984). Using a "standard exercise" in teaching reading comprehension. *ELT Journal*, 38, 114-120.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *IRAL*, 10(219-231).
- Severians, S. E., & Ten Dam, G. T. M. (1994). Gender differences in learning styles: A narrative review and quantitative meta-analysis. *Higher Education*, 27, 487-501.
- Sewart, D. (1980). Providing an information base for students studying at a distance. *Distance education*, 1(2), 171-187.
- Sewart, D. (1981). Distance education: A contradiction in terms? *Teaching at a distance*, 19, 8-18.
- Sewart, D. (1987). Staff development needs in distance education and campus - based education: Are they so different? In P. Smith & M. Kelly (Eds.), *Distance education and the main stream*. London: Croom Helm.
- Shahabuddin, S. H. (1995). *Pewujudan pembelajaran berjarak di fakulti perubatan UKM: Cabaran perkembangan (Challenges faced in developing a distance education system in the Medical Faculty of UKM)*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Sheath, H. (1965). *External studies in New England: The first ten years*. Armidale: UNE.
- Sheath, H. (1973). *Report on external studies*. Armidale: UNE.
- Sheridan, B. (1993, 10-11 April). *Threshold location and Likert-style questionnaires*. Paper presented at the Seventh International Objective Measurement Workshop, Atlanta.
- Shuell, T. J. (1987). Cognitive conceptions of learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 56(4), 411-436.
- Sidin, R. S. (1980). The roles of the universities in the national development of Malaysia as perceived by selected Government officials. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 41/05A, 1885.
- Silong, A. D., Ahmad, S., & Ismail, M. (1995, 30 May 1995). *Education for all: Challenges of administering distance education in Malaysian Institutions of Higher Learning*. Paper presented at the ASAIHL National Conference, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.



- Sinclair, B. (2000). *Learner Autonomy and its development in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL)*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham.
- Sinclair, B. (1994). Learner autonomy and literature teaching. *GRETA Journal*, 2, 17-24.
- Sinclair, B. (1999). More than an act of faith? Evaluating learner autonomy. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *Innovation and best practice in British ELT* (pp. 96-107). Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Sinclair, B., & Ellis, G. (1992) Survey: Learner training in EFC course book. *ELT Journal*, 46(2), 209-225.
- Siraj, S., Marzuki, S., Ishak, Z., & Lee, P. W. (1993). *Pendidikan di Malaysia (Education in Malaysia)*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publication & Distribution Sdn. Bhd.
- Skehan, P. (1989). *Individual differences in second- language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skinner, B. F. (1957). *Verbal Behaviour*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Slobin, D. I. (Ed.). (1986). *The crosslinguistic study of language acquisition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Smith, D. M., & Kolb, D. A. (1985) *User's guide for the learning-style inventory*. Boston, Mass: McBer and Company.
- Smith, I. M. (1964). *Spatial ability*. San Diego, CA: Knapp.
- Smith, K. C. (1979). *External studies at New England. A Silver Jubilee Review*. Armidale: UNE.
- Smith, K. C. (1988). External studies at New England. A Silver Jubilee Review (extracts). In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International Perspectives* (pp. 195-210). London: Routledge.
- Smith, R. M. (1982). *Learning how to learn: Applied theory for adults*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Snyder, B. R. (1971). *The hidden curriculum*. New York: Knopf.
- Sokolik, M. E. (1993). *Global views*. New York: Wadsworth Inc.
- Solomon, J. S. (1988). *The development of bilingual education in Malaysia*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn. Bhd.
- Sperry, L. (1973). Counsellors and learning styles. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 51, 478-483.
- Spolsky, B. (1969). Attitudinal aspects of second language learning. *Language Learning*, 19, 271-283.
- Srinivasan, L. (1977). *Perspectives on non formal adult learning*. New York: World Education.

- Stanchina, C., & Riley, P. (1978). Aspects of autonomous learning. *The British Council*, 76-97.
- Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 31, 304-318.
- Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamentals concepts of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stevenson, H. W., & Lee, S. Y. (1996). The academic achievement of Chinese students. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The handbook of Chinese psychology*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Stevenson, K., & Sander, P. (1998). How do Open University students expect to be taught at tutorials? *Open Learning* (June), 42-46.
- Stevenson, K., Sander, P., & Naylor, P. (1996). Student perceptions of the tutor's role in distance learning. *Open Learning*, June, 22-30.
- Stevick, E. (1980). *Teaching language: A way and ways*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Suave, L. (1993). What's behind the development of a course on the concept of distance education. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 93-109). London: Routledge.
- Sulaiman, S. Z. (1975). MARA Junior Science College: Student selection and its implication for educational system development in Malaysia. *Dissertation Abstracts international*, 36/11-A, 7119.
- Sussex, R. (1991). Current issues in distance language education and open learning: An overview and an Australian perspective. In G. L. Ervin (Ed.), *International perspective on foreign language education* (pp. 177-193). Lincolnwood, IL.: National Textbook Company.
- Svensson, L. (1976). *Study skills and learning*. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Svensson, L. (1977). On qualitative differences in learning III - Study skills and learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 47, 233-243.
- Svinicki, M. D. (1991). Practical implications of cognitive theories. In R. J. Menges & M. D. Svinicki (Eds.), *College teaching: From theory to practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Tang, K. C. C. (1993). Spontaneous collaborative learning: A new dimension in student learning experience? *Higher Education Research and Development*, 12(2), 115-130.
- Tarone, E., Frauenfelder, U., & Selinker, L. (1976). Systematicity/variability and stability/instability in interlanguage systems. In H. D. Brown (Ed.), *Papers in second language acquisition (Language learning special issue No.4)*. Ann Arbor, M.I.: Research Club in Language Learning.
- Thomas, L. F., & Augestein, S. H. (1985). *Self-organised learning: Foundation of a conversational science for psychology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Thompson, J. D., Hawkes, R. W., & Avery, R. W. (1969). Truth strategies and university organisation. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 5, 4-25.



- Thorpe, M. (1987). Student assignment. In M. Thorpe & D. Grugeon (Eds.), *Open learning for adults*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Tough, A. (1979). *The adults' learning projects: A fresh approach to theory and practice in adult learning (2nd Edition)*. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Tucker, G. R., Hamayan, E., & Genesee, F. H. (1976). Affective cognitive, and social factors in second language acquisition. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 32, 214-226.
- Tudor, J. (1996). *Learner- centredness as language education*. Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
- UKM. (1998). *Program Pengajian Jarak Jauh (Distance Learning Programme)*. Bangi, Selangor: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- UKM. (1999). *Resolusi bengkel pemantapan perlaksanaan pusat pengajian jarak jauh (Resolution of the workshop on stabilising the development of the distance learning programme of UKM)*. Bangi, UKM: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- USM. (1993). *Conference on distance education*. Pulau Pinang, Malaysia: Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- USM. (1996). *Distance Education*.: Universiti Sains Malaysia.  
(<http://www.usm.my/academic/programme/distance/program/index.html>).
- USM. (1998). *Rancangan Pengajian Jarak Jauh (Distance Learning Programme)*. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Veblen, T. (1957 (First published 1918)). *The higher learning in America*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Verduin, J. R., & Clark, T. A. (1991). *Distance education: The foundations of effective practice*. San Francisco: Jossey - Bass.
- Vermetten, Y. J., Vermunt, J. D., & Lodewijks, H. G. (1999). A longitudinal perspective on strategies in higher education -- different view-points towards development. *British Journal of Higher Education*, 69(2), 221-242.
- Vermunt, J. D. (1996). Metacognitive, cognitive and affective aspects of learning styles and strategies: A phenomenographic analysis. *Higher Education*, 31, 25-50.
- Vermunt, J. D. (1998). The regulation of constructive learning processes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 68, 149-171.
- Vermunt, J. D. H. M., & Rijswijk, F. A. W. N. (1988). Analysis and development of students' skills in self-regulated learning. *Higher Education*, 17, 647-682.
- Victori, M., & Lockhart, W. (1995). Enhancing metacognition in self-directed language learning. In N. F. Davies (Ed.), *System* (pp. 223-234). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Vogt, L. A., Jordan, C., & Tharp, R. G. (1987). Explaining school failure, producing school success: Two cases. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18, 212-219.

- Vosniadou, S. (1996). Towards a revised cognitive psychology for new advances in learning and instruction. *Learning and instruction*, 6, 95-109.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Warden, C. A., & Lin, H. J. (2000). Existence of integrative motivation in an Asian EFL setting. *Foreign Language Annals*, 33(5), 535-547.
- Watkin, D., & Hattie. (1981). The learning process of Australian University students: Investigation of contextual and psychological factors. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51, 384-393.
- Watkins, D. (1982). Identifying the study process dimensions of Australian university students. *Australian Journal of Education*, 26, 76-85.
- Watkins, D. (1983). Assessing tertiary study processes. *Human Learning*, 2, 29-37.
- Watkins, D. (1996). Hong Kong secondary school learners: A developmental perspective. In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*. Melbourne and Hong Kong: Australian Council for Educational Research and the Comparative Educational Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.
- Watkins, D., & Hattie, J. (1985). A longitudinal study of the approaches to learning of Australian tertiary students. *Human Learning*, 4, 127-141.
- Watson, J. K. P. (1983). Cultural pluralism, nation-building and educational policies in Peninsular Malaysia. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *Language planning and language education* (pp. 132-145): George Allen & Unwin.
- Waugh, R. F., & Addison, P. A. (1998). A Rasch measurement model analysis of the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 68, 95-112.
- Wedemeyer, C. (1963). Going to college at home. *Home Study Review*, 4(3), 24-32.
- Wedemeyer, C. (1973). The use of correspondence education for post-secondary education. In A. Kabwasa & M. Kaunda (Eds.), *Correspondence education in Africa*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Wedemeyer, C. A. (1981). *Learning at the back door*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wedemeyer, C. A. (1988). Back door learning in the learning society. In D. Sewart & D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance education: International perspectives* (pp. 128-140). London: Routledge.
- Weinstein, C. E., Underwood, V. L., Wicker, F. W., & Cubberley, W. E. (1979). Cognitive and affective learning properties: Verbal and imaginal elaboration. In H. F. O'Neil, Jr. & C. D. Spielberger (Eds.), *Cognitive and affective learning strategies* (pp. 45-75). New York: Academic Press.
- Wenden, A. (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. London: Prentice Hall.



- Wesche, M. B. (1979). Learning behaviours of successful adult students on intensive language training. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 35, 415-430.
- White, C. (1995). Autonomy and strategy use in distance foreign language learning: Research findings. *System*, 23(2), 207-221.
- White, C. J. (1994). Language learning strategy research in distance education. In T. Evans & D. Murphy (Eds.), *Research in distance education* (pp. 10-20). Geelong: Deakin University Printery.
- Wiersma, W. (1991). *Research methods in education*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
- William, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Willing, K. (1988). *Learning styles in adult migrant education*. Adelaide, Australia: NCRC research series.
- Willing, K. (1989). *Teaching how to learn: learning strategies in ESL*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.
- Wilson, R. C., Gaff, J. G., Dienst, E. R., Wood, L., & Pavry, J. L. (1975). *College professors and their impact on students*. New York: Wiley.
- Windeatt, S. (1981). A project for self-access learning for English Language and study skills. *Practical Paper in English Language Education*, 3.
- Witkin, H. A. (1965). Psychological differentiation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 70.
- Witkin, H. A. (1977a). Cross-cultural perspective on psychological differentiation in children and their implications for education. In Y. H. Poortinga (Ed.), *Basic problems in cross-cultural psychology*. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeiltlinger.
- Witkin, H. A. (1977b). Theory in cross-cultural research: Its uses and risks. In Y. H. Poortinga (Ed.), *Basic problems in cross-cultural psychology*. Amsterdam: Swets and Zeiltlinger.
- Witkin, H. A., Dyk, R. B., Faterson, H. F., Goodenough, D. R., & Karp, S. A. (1962). *Psychological differentiation: Studies of development*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Witkin, H. A., & Goodenough, D. R. (1981). *Cognitive styles: Essence and origins*. New York: International University Press.
- Witkin, H. A., Moore, C. A., Goodenough, D. R., & Cox, P. W. (1977). Field-dependent and field-independent cognitive styles and their educational implications. *Review of educational Research*, 47(1), 1-64.
- Wong, H. K., & Ee, T. H. (1971). *Education in Malaysia* (2nd edn.) Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd.
- Wong, H. K., & Ee, T. H. (1975). *Education in Malaysia* (3rd edn.) Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books.

Wong, H. K., & Gwee, Y. H. (1972). *Perspectives: The development of education in Malaysia and Singapore*. Singapore: Heinemann.

Zelinker, T., & Jeffrey, W. (1976). Reflective and impulsive children. *Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 41.



## Appendix 1A

### Criteria and conditions for placement of students in the English Proficiency Courses prior to the 1998/99 session

Criteria	Conditions	First course he/she had to take
Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM) (Malaysian Certificate of Examination )	A1, A2	VG 1043
	C3, C4	VG1033
	C5, C6	VG1023
	P7, P8, F9	VG1013
Matriculation One-year matriculation course run by MARA and selected Malaysian Universities)	A, A-	VG 1043
	B+, B, B-	VG1033
	C+, C, C-	VG1023
	D+, D, D-	VG1013
SPM holders (with results more than four years old) <b>AND</b> Students with diplomas from other institutions of higher learning	EPT grade A	VG 1043
	EPT grade B	VG1033
	EPT grade C	VG1023
	EPT grade D	VG1013

## Appendix 1B

**English Proficiency Courses that the various  
categorises of students have to take prior to the  
1998/99 session**

Category I (High Proficiency students)	Category II (Average Proficiency students)	Category III (Low Proficiency students)	Category IV Low Proficiency students)
1) VG 1043 2) ESP/ EOP 3) ESP/ EOP 4) ESP/ EOP	1)VG 1033 2)VG 1043 3) ESP/ EOP 4) ESP/ EOP	1) VG 1023 2) VG 1033 3) VG 1043 4) ESP/ EOP	1) VG 1013 2 )VG 1023 3) VG 1033 4) VG 1043



## Appendix 1C

### Criteria and conditions for exemptions and awarding free credits units

Criteria	Conditions	Credit units awarded	Additional Condition
<b>Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM)</b> (Malaysian Certificate of Examination )	A1, A2	6 units (exempted from VG 1023 & VG1033)	If a student's result is more than four years old, he has to take the EPT.
	C3, C4	3 units (exempted from VG 1023)	
<b>Matriculation</b> One-year matriculation course run by MARA and selected Malaysian Universities)	A, A-	6 units (exempted from VG 1023 & VG1033)	If a student's SPM grade is higher than his Matriculation grade than his SPM grade will be used as the criteria for consideration.
	B+, B, B-	3 units (exempted from VG 1023)	
<b>TOEFL</b>	550 marks	6 units (exempted from VG 1023 & VG1033)	
<b>IELTS</b>	Levels 6 - 9	6 units (exempted from VG 1023 & VG1033)	
<b>SPM holders</b> (with results more than four years old) AND <b>Diplomas</b> from other institutions of higher learning	EPT grade A	6 units (exempted from VG 1023 & VG1033)	
	EPT grade B	3 units (exempted from VG 1023)	
<b>Others</b>	Will be decided by the Faculty		

## Appendix 1D

**English Proficiency Courses that the various  
categorises of students have to take beginning from  
the 1998/99 session**

Category 1 High Proficiency students	Category 2 Average Proficiency students	Category 3 Low Proficiency students
1) Exempted from VG 1023 (awarded 3 free units) 2) Exempted from VG 1033 (awarded 3 free units) 3) ESP/ EOP 4) ESP/ EOP	1) Exempted from VG 1023 (awarded 3 free units) 2) VG 1033 3) ESP/ EOP 4)ESP/ EOP	1) VG 1023 2) VG 1033 3) ESP/ EOP 4)ESP/ EOP



## Appendix 2A

### A list of the books used for the various proficiency courses

VG 1013 – Elementary Level	Headway Elementary's Student Book and Workbook
VG 1023 – Pre-intermediate level	Headway Pre-intermediate's Student Book and Workbook
VG 1033 – Intermediate level	Headway Intermediate's Student Book and Workbook
VG 1043 – Upper-intermediate level	Headway Upper-intermediate's Student Book and Workbook

# Appendix 4A

## Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Survey (PLSPS)(1987)

Directions: People learn in many different ways. For example, some people learn primarily with their eyes (visual learners) or with their ears (auditory learners); some people prefer to learn by experience and/or by “hands-on” tasks (kinesthetic or tactile learners); some people learn better when they work alone, and others prefer to learn in groups. This questionnaire has been designed to help you identify the way(s) you learn best—the way(s) you *prefer* to learn.

Read each statement on the following pages. Please respond to the statements as they apply to your study of English. Decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement. For example, if you *strongly agree* (SA), mark:

<i>strongly agree</i> (SA)	<i>agree</i> (A)	<i>undecided</i> (U)	<i>disagree</i> (D)	<i>strongly disagree</i> (SD)
X				

Please respond to each statement quickly, without too much thought. Try not to change your responses after you choose them. Please answer all the questions. Then use the materials that follow the questionnaire to score your responses.

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. When the teacher tells me the instructions, I understand better.					
2. I prefer to learn by doing something in class.					
3. I get more work done when I work with others.					
4. I learn more when I study with a group.					
5. In class, I learn best when I work with others.					
6. I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard.					
7. When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better.					
8. When I do things in class, I learn better.					
9. I remember things I have heard in class better than things I have read.					
10. When I read instructions, I remember them better.					



	SA	A	U	D	SD
11. I learn more when I can make a model of something.					
12. I understand better when I read instructions.					
13. When I study alone, I remember things better.					
14. I learn more when I make something for a class project.					
15. I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments.					
16. I learn better when I make drawings as I study.					
17. I learn better in class when the teacher gives a lecture.					
18. When I work alone, I learn better.					
19. I understand things better in class when I participate in role-playing.					
20. I learn better in class when I listen to someone.					
21. I enjoy working on an assignment with two or three classmates.					
22. When I build something, I remember what I have learned better.					
23. I prefer to study with others.					
24. I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.					
25. I enjoy making something for a class project.					
26. I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.					
27. In class, I work better when I work alone.					
28. I prefer working on projects by myself.					
29. I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to a lecture.					
30. I prefer to work by myself.					

Self-Scoring Sheet for Perceptual Learning Style Preference Survey

Directions: There are 5 statements for each learning category in this questionnaire. The questions are grouped below according to each learning style. Each question you answer has a numerical value:

<i>strongly agree</i> (SA)	<i>agree</i> (A)	<i>undecided</i> (U)	<i>disagree</i> (D)	<i>strongly disagree</i> (SD)
5	4	3	2	1

Fill in the blanks below with the numerical value of each answer. For example, if you answered *strongly agree* for statement 6 (a visual question), write the number 5 (SA) on the blank next to question 6.

Visual

6— 5

When you have completed all the numerical values for *Visual*, add the numbers together. Multiply the answer by 2, and put the total in the appropriate blank.

Follow this process for each of the learning style categories. When you are finished, look at the scale that follows. It will help you determine your

- major learning style preference(s): score: 38–50
- minor learning style preference(s) score: 25–37
- negligible learning styles: score: 0–24

If you need help, please ask your teacher.

Scoring Sheet

Visual

6 \_\_\_\_\_  
10 \_\_\_\_\_  
12 \_\_\_\_\_  
24 \_\_\_\_\_  
29 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Score)

Tactile

11 \_\_\_\_\_  
14 \_\_\_\_\_  
16 \_\_\_\_\_  
22 \_\_\_\_\_  
25 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Score)

Auditory

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
7 \_\_\_\_\_  
9 \_\_\_\_\_  
17 \_\_\_\_\_  
20 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Score)

Group

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
5 \_\_\_\_\_  
21 \_\_\_\_\_  
23 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Score)



2 \_\_\_\_\_

8 \_\_\_\_\_

15 \_\_\_\_\_

19 \_\_\_\_\_

26 \_\_\_\_\_

13 \_\_\_\_\_

18 \_\_\_\_\_

27 \_\_\_\_\_

28 \_\_\_\_\_

30 \_\_\_\_\_

#### Kinesthetic Major Learning Style Preference

You learn best by experience, by being involved physically in classroom experiences. You remember information well when you actively participate in activities, field trips, and role-playing in the classroom. A combination of stimuli—for example, an audio tape combined with an activity—will help you understand new material.

#### Tactile Major Learning Style Preference

You learn best when you have the opportunity to do “hands-on” experiences with materials. That is, working on experiments in a laboratory, handling and building models, and touching and working with materials provide you with the most successful learning situations. *Writing notes or instructions* can help you remember information, and *physical involvement* in class-related activities may help you understand new information.

#### Group Major Learning Style Preference

You learn more easily when you study with at least one other student, and you will be more successful completing work well when you *work with others*. You value group interaction and class work with other students, and you remember information better when you work with two or three classmates. The stimulation you receive from group work helps you learn and understand new information.

#### Individual Major Learning Style Preference

You learn best when you work *alone*. You think better when you study alone, and you remember information you learn by yourself. You understand material best when you learn it alone, and you make better progress in learning when you work by yourself.

#### Minor Learning Styles

In most cases, minor learning styles indicate areas where you can function well as a learner. Usually, a very successful learner can learn in several different ways, and so you might want to experiment with ways to practice and strengthen your minor learning styles.

#### Negligible Learning Styles

Often, a negligible score indicates that you may have difficulty learning in that way. One solution may be to direct your learning to your stronger styles. Another solution may be to try to work on some of the skills to strengthen your learning style(s) in the negligible area(s).\*

---

\* For permission to use this survey, contact the author by e-mail (see e-mail address in the “Contributors” section of this volume) or at Department of English, University of Wyoming, Hoyt 201, Laramie, WY 82071-3355.



## Appendix 4B

### Approaches to Studying Inventory (Ramsden, 1983)

#### SECTION B

In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements listed below. We are concerned here with your approaches to studying in general. Please answer for the Field which you are spending most time on this year.

Please circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view.

- 4 (✓✓) means Definitely agree  
3 (✓) means Agree with reservations  
1 (x) means Disagree with reservations  
0 (xx) means Definitely disagree  
2 (?) is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you,  
or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer.

- |   | ✓✓ | ✓ | x | xx |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1. I find it difficult to organise my time effectively.   | 4  | 3 | 1 | 0  |
| 2. I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in others, whenever possible.                            | 4  | 3 | 1 | 0  |
| 3. Although I have a fairly good general idea of many things, my knowledge of the details is rather weak. | 4  | 3 | 1 | 0  |
| 4. I enjoy competition: I find it stimulating.  | 4  | 3 | 1 | 0  |

	✓✓	✓	x	xx
5. I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read.	4	3	1	0
6. Ideas in books often set me off on long chains of thought of my own, only tenuously related to what I was reading.	4	3	1	0
7. I chose my present courses mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards.	4	3	1	0
8. Continuing my education was something which happened to me, rather than something I really wanted for myself.	4	3	1	0
9. I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments.	4	3	1	0
10. I often find myself questioning things that I hear in lectures or read in books.	4	3	1	0
11. I generally prefer to tackle each part of a topic or problem in order, working out one at a time.	4	3	1	0
12. The continual pressure of work - assignments, deadlines and competition - often makes me tense and depressed.	4	3	1	0
13. I find it difficult to "switch tracks" when working on a problem: I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go.	4	3	1	0
14. My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of term.	4	3	1	0
15. It's important to me to do really well in the courses here.	4	3	1	0
16. Lecturers seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated.	4	3	1	0



	✓	✓	x	xx
17. Distractions make it difficult for me to do much effective work in the evenings.	4	3	1	0
18. When I'm doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular lecturer seems to want.	4	3	1	0
19. I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read.	4	3	1	0
20. Lecturers sometimes give indications of what is likely to come up in exams, so I look out for what may be hints.	4	3	1	0
21. In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution.	4	3	1	0
22. My main reason for being here is that it will help me to get a better job.	4	3	1	0
23. Often I find myself wondering whether the work I am doing here is really worthwhile.	4	3	1	0
24. I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult.	4	3	1	0
25. I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised.	4	3	1	0
26. A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic.	4	3	1	0
27. I prefer to follow well tried approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous.	4	3	1	0
28. I'm rather slow at starting work in the evenings.	4	3	1	0

	√√	√	x	xx
29. In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply.	4	3	1	0
30. When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in use-ful later.	4	3	1	0
31. I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far.	4	3	1	0
32. I generally choose modules more from the way they fit in with career plans than from my own interests.	4	3	1	0
33. I am usually cautious in drawing con-clusions unless they are well suppor-ted by evidence.	4	3	1	0
34. When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer.	4	3	1	0
35. I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the modules I'm taking.	4	3	1	0
36. Often I find I have to read things without having a chance to really understand them.	4	3	1	0
37. If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do some-thing to change them.	4	3	1	0
38. In reporting practical work, I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting the findings.	4	3	1	0
39. My main reason for being here is so that I can learn more about the sub-jects which really interest me,	4	3	1	0
40. In trying to understand new topics, I often explain them to myself in ways that other people don't seem to follow.	4	3	1	0
41. I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn.	4	3	1	0



	✓✓	✓	x	xx
42. It is important to me to do things better than my friends, if I possibly can.	4	3	1	0
43. I find it better to start straight away with the details of a new topic and build up an overall picture in that way.	4	3	1	0
44. Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own.	4	3	1	0
45. One way or another I manage to get hold of the books I need for studying.	4	3	1	0
46. I often get criticised for introducing irrelevant material into my essays or tutorials.	4	3	1	0
47. I find that studying academic topics can often be really exciting and gripping.	4	3	1	0
48. The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions.	4	3	1	0
49. I certainly want to pass the next set of exams, but it doesn't really matter if I only just scrape through.	4	3	1	0
50. I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper.	4	3	1	0
51. Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to fit them together into an overall picture.	4	3	1	0
52. I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments.	4	3	1	0
53. Having to speak in tutorials is quite an ordeal for me.	4	3	1	0

	✓✓	✓	x	xx
54. Puzzles or problems fascinate me particularly where you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion,	4	3	1	0
55. I spend a good deal of my spare time in finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in classes.	4	3	1	0
56. I find it helpful to 'map out' a new topic for myself by seeing how the ideas fit together.	4	3	1	0
57. I seem to be a bit too ready to jump to conclusions without waiting for all the evidence.	4	3	1	0
58. I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters.	4	3	1	0
59. I think it is important to look at problems rationally and logically without making intuitive jumps.	4	3	1	0
60. I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the lecturer presented them.	4	3	1	0
61. When I'm reading an article or research report, I generally examine the evidence carefully to decide whether the conclusion is justified.	4	3	1	0
62. Tutors seem to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas.	4	3	1	0
63. When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to come here.	4	3	1	0
64. I find academic topics so interesting, I should like to continue with them after I finish this course.	4	3	1	0



## Appendix 5A

### A contrast of the two poles of the field independent/ field dependent dimension (Willing, 1988:50-51)

Analytical (Field Independent)	Concrete (Field Dependent)
<b>Information Processing</b>	
1. this person finds it relatively easy to detach an experienced (perceived) item from its given background	1. this person experiences item as fused with its context; what is interesting is the impression of the whole
2. the item is extractable because it is perceived as having a rudimentary meaning on its own; thus it can be moved out of its presented surroundings and into a comprehensive category system—for understanding (and 'filing' in memory)	2. item is experienced and comprehended as part of an overall associational unity with concrete and personal inter-connections; (item's storage in, and retrieval from, memory is via these often affectively-charged associations)
3. tendency to show traits of introversion (the person's mental processing can be strongly activated by low-intensity stimulus; hence dislikes excessive input)	3. tendency to show traits of extraversion (person's mental processing is activated by relatively higher-intensity stimulus; therefore likes rich, varied input)
4. tendency to be 'reflective' and cautious in thinking tasks	4. tendency to be 'impulsive' in thinking tasks; 'plays hunches'
5. any creativity or unconventionality would derive from individual's development of criteria on a rational basis	5. any creativity or unconventionality would derive from individual's imaginativeness or 'lateral thinking'
<b>Learning Strengths</b>	
6. performs best on analytical language tasks (e.g. understanding and using correct syntactical structures; semantically ordered comprehension of words; phonetic articulation)	6. performs best on tasks calling for intuitive 'feel' for language (e.g. expression; richness of lexical connotation; discourse; rhythm and intonation)
7. favours material tending toward the abstract and impersonal; factual or analytical; useful; ideas	7. prefers material which has a human, social content; or which has fantasy or humour; personal; musical, artistic

8. has affinity for methods which are:  
focused; systematic; sequential;  
cumulative

9. likely to set own learning goals and  
direct own learning; (but may well  
choose or prefer to use—for own  
purpose—an authoritative text or  
passive lecture situation.

10. 'left hemisphere strengths'

8. has affinity for methods in which vari-  
ous features are managed simul-  
taneously; realistically; in significant  
context

9. less likely to direct own learning; may  
function well in quasi-autonomy (e.g.  
'guided discovery'); (but may well ex-  
press preference for a formal, teacher-  
dominated learning arrangement, as a  
compensation for own perceived de-  
ficiency in ability to structure

10. 'right hemisphere strengths'

#### Human Relations

11. greater tendency to experience self  
as a separate entity; with, also a  
great deal of internal differentiation  
and complexity

12. personal identity and social role to  
a large extent self-defined

13. more tendency to be occupied with own  
thoughts and responses; relatively un-  
aware of the subtle emotional content  
in interpersonal interactions

14. relatively less need to be with people

15. self-esteem not ultimately dependent  
upon the opinion of others

11. tendency to experience and relate not  
as a completely differentiated 'self',  
but rather as—to a degree—fused  
with group and with environment

12. greater tendency to defer to social  
group for identity and role-definition

13. more other-oriented (e.g. looking at  
and scrutinizing others' faces; usually  
very aware of others' feelings in an  
interaction; sensitive to 'cues')

14. greater desire to be with people

15. learning performance much improved  
if group or authority figure give  
praise



## Appendix 5B

### Willing's rank order of questions/items according to average level of response (Willing, 1988:116-117)

Rank - Order of Question		% who marked this as 'best'
(Q20) I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation.	(3.54)	62%
(Q11) I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.	(3.51)	61%
(Q4) In class, I like to learn by conversations.	(3.42)	55%
(Q8) I like the teacher to explain <u>everything</u> to us.	(3.40)	54%
(Q19) I like to learn many new words.	(3.38)	47%
(Q28) I like to learn by talking to friends in English.	(3.31)	48%
(Q29) I like to learn by watching, listening to Australians.	(3.19)	39%
(Q22) I like to learn English words by <u>hearing</u> them.	(3.16)	37%
(Q21) I like to learn English words by <u>seeing</u> them.	(3.16)	38%
(Q10) I like the teacher to help me talk about my interests.	(3.15)	35%
(Q15) I like to learn English in a small group.	(3.14)	35%
(Q23) I like to learn English words by <u>doing</u> something.	(3.12)	36%
(Q18) I like to study grammar.	(3.10)	39%
(Q25) At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.	(3.01)	26%
(Q7) I like to have my own textbook.	(3.00)	34%
(Q30) I like to learn by using English in shops/CES/trains...	(2.96)	30%
(Q9) I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.	(2.92)	24%
(Q17) I like to go out with the class and practise English.	(2.91)	30%
(Q27) At home, I like to learn by studying English books.	(2.87)	21%
(Q1) In English class, I like to learn by reading.	(2.84)	21%

(Q6)	I want to write everything in my notebook.	(2.77)	21%
(Q2)	In class, I like to listen and use cassettes.	(2.77)	22%
(Q12)	I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes.	(2.76)	27%
(Q24)	At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers. etc.	(2.73)	21%
(Q5)	In class, I like to learn by pictures, films, video.	(2.72)	19%
(Q16)	I like to learn English with the whole class.	(2.68)	21%
(Q26)	At home, I like to learn by using cassettes.	(2.63)	15%
(Q14)	I like to learn English by talking in pairs.	(2.63)	15%
(Q3)	In class, I like to learn by games.	(2.35)	10%
(Q13)	I like to study English by myself (alone).	(1.69)	3%



## Appendix 6A

### USLPCQ

**Sub-questionnaire 1: How do you learn English ?**

**Sub-questionnaire 2: Approaches to Studying**

**Sub-questionnaire 3: Perceptions of Courses**

#### Introductory Section: Students' Personal Details

Name: (optional)	
Home address:	
Telephone no (optional): E-mail address (optional):	Faculty: Year: Name of class instructor:
English course that you are taking this semester:	English courses that you have taken:
Sex:	Age:
Grade in English in the SPM: Year exam was taken:	Hometown:
	Marks in the EPT (if any):
What is your first language?	
Other languages?	

All information given will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Please do not ponder over each question, answer each question spontaneously.  
Thank you for answering the questionnaire.

Thang Siew Ming (researcher)  
Faculty of English Language  
Studies,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

## Sub-questionnaire 1: How do you learn English?

In this section we would like to find out how you learn English. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each statement.

- 4 for "strongly agree"
- 3 for "agree"
- 2 for "disagree"
- 1 for "strongly disagree"

Circle the response of your choice.

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In English class, I like to learn by reading.                                      | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. In English class, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.                       | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in activities.                    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in conversations and discussions. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. In English class, I like to learn by viewing pictures, films, and videos.          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. In English class, I like to learn by taking down notes.                            | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures.                        | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. I like the teacher to explain everything to us.                                    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.                                 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I like the teacher to ask me to talk about my interests.                          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes.                                    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. I like the teacher to let me find my own mistakes                                 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



13. I like to study English on my own.	4	3	2	1
14. I like to learn English by talking in pairs.	4	3	2	1
15. I like to learn English in a small group.	4	3	2	1
16. I like to learn English with the whole class.	4	3	2	1
17. I like to go out with the class and practise speaking in English.	4	3	2	1
18. I like to study grammar.	4	3	2	1
19. I like to learn many new words.	4	3	2	1
20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation of English words.	4	3	2	1
21. I like to learn English words by seeing them.	4	3	2	1
22. I like to learn English words by hearing them.	4	3	2	1
23. I like to learn English words by participating in related activities.	4	3	2	1
24. At home, I like to learn by reading newspapers, etc.	4	3	2	1
25. At home, I like to learn by watching TV in English.	4	3	2	1
26. At home, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.	4	3	2	1
27. At home, I like to learn by studying English books.	4	3	2	1
28. I like to learn English by talking to friends.	4	3	2	1
29. I like to learn English by watching and listening to people whose English is good.	4	3	2	1
30. I like to learn English by using it in my daily life.	4	3	2	1

## Sub-questionnaire 2: New Approaches to Studying Inventory (NASI)

In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements listed below. We are concerned here with your approach to studying in general.

**Please circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view.**

- 4 for "strongly agree"
- 3 for "agree"
- 2 for "disagree"
- 1 for "strongly disagree"

1. I rather drifted into higher education without deciding for 4 3 2 1  
myself what I really wanted to do.
2. My main reason for being in university is to learn more about 4 3 2 1  
subjects that really interest me.
3. Ideas in course books or articles often set me off on long 4 3 2 1  
chains of thought about what I'm reading.
4. The best way for me to understand the meanings of technical 4 3 2 1  
terms is to remember the text-book definitions.
5. My main reason for being here is that it will help me to get a 4 3 2 1  
better job.



6. When I'm reading an article or book, I try to work out for 4 3 2 1  
myself exactly what it is about.
7. I'm not sure what's important, so I try to get down just as 4 3 2 1  
much as I can in lectures.
8. I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other 4 3 2 1  
assignments.
9. One way or another I manage to get hold of books or 4 3 2 1  
whatever I need for studying.
10. When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to 4 3 2 1  
come here.
11. I put a lot of effort into making sure I have the most 4 3 2 1  
important details in my finger tips.
12. I look at the evidence carefully and then try to reach my own 4 3 2 1  
conclusions about things I'm studying.
13. Sometimes I worry about whether I'll ever be able 4 3 2 1  
to cope with the work properly.
14. I know what I want to get out of this course and I'm 4 3 2 1  
determined to achieve it.
15. Generally, I find the set work easy to do. 4 3 2 1
16. Often I find myself reading things without really trying to 4 3 2 1  
understand them.
17. I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand 4 3 2 1  
things which initially seem difficult.
18. I work steadily throughout the course, rather than leaving 4 3 2 1  
everything until the last minute.
19. I'm not prepared just to accept things I'm told; I have to 4 3 2 1  
think them out myself.

20. I spend quite a lot of time repeating or copying out things to help me remember them. 4 3 2 1
21. I generally try to make use of my time during the day. 4 3 2 1
22. I think I'm quite systematic and organised in the way I go about studying. 4 3 2 1
23. When learning a new topic, I find it difficult to see how the ideas fit together. 4 3 2 1
24. I seem to be able to grasp things for myself pretty well on the whole. 4 3 2 1
25. Sometimes I find myself thinking about ideas from the course when I am doing other things. 4 3 2 1
26. I chose my present courses mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards. 4 3 2 1
27. I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised. 4 3 2 1
28. When I'm reading, I examine the details carefully to see how they fit in with what's being said. 4 3 2 1
29. I often seem to panic if I get behind with my work. 4 3 2 1
30. I enjoy competition; I find it stimulating. 4 3 2 1
31. I generally choose courses more from the way they fit in with career plans than from my own interests. 4 3 2 1
32. Although I can remember facts and details, I often can't see any overall picture. 4 3 2 1
33. So far, I seem to have a good grasp of the subjects I'm studying. 4 3 2 1
34. I work hard when I'm studying and generally manage to keep my mind on what I'm doing. 4 3 2 1
35. I often have trouble making sense of the things I have to remember. 4 3 2 1



36. I think I'm on this course more to please other people than 4 3 2 1  
because I really wanted it myself.
37. Often I feel I'm drowning in the sheer amount of material 4 3 2 1  
we're having to cope with on this course.
38. I try to relate ideas I come across to other topics or other 4 3 2 1  
courses whenever possible.
39. I constantly check the course schedule to make sure I am 4 3 2 1  
reading what is required of me.
40. I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get 4 3 2 1  
than in the courses I'm taking.
41. I don't usually have much difficulty in making sense of new 4 3 2 1  
information or ideas.
42. I tend to read very little beyond what's required for 4 3 2 1  
completing assignments.
43. I organise my study time carefully to make the 4 3 2 1  
best use of it.
44. When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own 4 3 2 1  
mind how all the ideas fit together.
45. It's important to me to feel I'm doing as well as I really can 4 3 2 1  
in the courses here.
46. I usually set out to understand for myself the meaning of 4 3 2 1  
what we have to learn.
47. I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of 4 3 2 1  
what I have to learn.
48. Coming here wasn't really my choice: more other people's 4 3 2 1  
expectations and no obvious alternative.
49. Often I lie awake worrying about work I think I won't be 4 3 2 1  
able to do.

50. I make sure I find conditions for studying which let me get 4 3 2 1  
on with my work easily.

51. When I'm doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind 4 3 2 1  
exactly what that particular teacher wants.

52. I usually don't think about the implications of what I have 4 3 2 1  
read.

53. It's important for me to be able to follow the argument or see 4 3 2 1  
the reasoning behind something.



### Sub-questionnaire 3: New Course Perception Questionnaire (NCPQ)

In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree to each of the statements listed below. We would like you to relate your answers specifically to the Learning of English.

Circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view:

- 4 means 'strongly agree'
- 3 means 'agree'
- 2 means 'disagree'
- 1 means 'strongly disagree'

1. Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from us for changes to their teaching methods/materials. 4 3 2 1
2. There's a lot of pressure on me as a student. 4 3 2 1
3. It 's always easy to know the standard of work expected of me 4 3 2 1
4. We seem to be given a lot of choice here in the work we have to do. 4 3 2 1
5. The teachers in this department always seem ready to give their help and advice on approaches to studying. 4 3 2 1

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. I usually have a clear idea of where I am going and what's expected of me in this department.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Staff generally consult us before making decisions about how the courses are run.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. This department gives us a chance to use methods of study which suit our own way of learning.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. The workload is too heavy.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. The teaching/learning components offered by this department are sufficient for my purpose.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Teachers in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching/materials at the right level for us.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. Most of the teachers here really try hard to get to know us   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. I utilise the teaching materials (which include text, course guide, study guide, and video materials -- whichever are relevant) provided by the department extensively. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. There is so much written work to do that it's very difficult for me to get down to independent reading.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. Teachers here usually tell us exactly what we are supposed to be learning.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. A greater variety of teaching/learning components should be provided.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. There is a real opportunity in this department for us to choose the particular areas we want to study.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching/materials very thoroughly.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. Teachers in this department generally take our ideas and interests seriously.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 20.The teaching/learning components are very helpful.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21.We have a great deal of choice over how we are going to<br>learn in this department.        | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22.Teachers here generally make it clear from the start what<br>will be required of us.        | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23.It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too<br>many topics.               | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24.Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties we may<br>be having with our work. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Soal-selidik 1: Bagaimana anda belajar Bahasa Inggeris**

**Soal-selidik 2: Pendekatan Pembelajaran**

**Soal-selidik 3: Persepsi terhadap kursus**

***Bahagian Pengenalan: Hal Peribadi Penuntut***

Nama: (optional)	
Alamat Rumah:	
No. Talipon (optional): Alamat E-mail (optional):	Fakulti: Tahun: Nama Pengajar:
Kursus B. Inggeris yang sedang diikuti:	Kursus-kursus B. Inggeris yang telah diikuti:
Jantina:	Umur:
Gred B. Inggeris dalam SPM: Tahun SPM diambil:	Kampung Halaman:
	Markah EPT (jika ada):
Apakah bahasa utama anda?	
Bahasa-bahasa lain?	

***Semua matlumat akan ditimbang secara sulit.***

Mahasiswa diharapkan tidak berfikir terlalu lama pada sesuatu pertanyaan dan menjawab secara spontan. Saya mengucapkan ribuan terima kasih kerana sudi menjawab soal-selidik ini

Thang Siew Ming (penyelidik)  
Fakulti Pengajian Bahasa Inggeris  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia



## Soal-selidik 1 : Bagaimana anda belajar Bahasa Inggeris?

Di bahagian ini, kami ingin mengetahui cara anda mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris. Sila nyatakan setakat mana anda bersetuju dengan setiap satu dari kenyataan berikut.

- 4 untuk 'sangat bersetuju'
- 3 untuk 'bersetuju'
- 2 untuk 'tidak bersetuju'
- 1 untuk 'sangat tidak bersetuju'

**Bulatkan nombor pilihan anda.**

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 1. Saya suka belajar melalui pembacaan.                           | 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. Saya suka belajar dengan mendengar kaset.                      | 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. Saya suka belajar melalui aktiviti.                            | 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. Saya suka belajar melalui perbualan dan perbincangan.          | 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. Saya suka belajar melalui gambar, filem dan video.             | 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. Saya suka belajar melalui catatan nota.                        | 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. Saya suka belajar dengan mendengar syarahan.                   | 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. Saya suka guru memberi penerangan yang perinci kepada saya.    | 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. Saya suka diberi masalah oleh guru untuk diselesaikan.         | 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. Saya suka guru meminta saya bercerita tentang kegemaran saya. | 4 3 2 1 |
| 11. Saya suka guru memberitahu saya mengenai kesilapan saya.      | 4 3 2 1 |

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 12. Saya suka diberi peluang untuk mencari kesilapan saya sendiri.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. Saya suka belajar Bahasa Inggeris secara bersendirian.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan bertutur dalam pasangan.                                       | 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris secara berkumpulan.   | 4 3 2 1 |
| 16. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan seluruh kelas .  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 17. Saya suka keluar dengan kelas dan mengamal perbualan Bah. Inggeris.                                   | 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. Saya suka belajar nahu/tatabahasa Bah. Inggeris.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 19. Saya suka belajar banyak perkataan baru.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 20. Saya suka mengamal bunyi dan cara sebutan Bahasa Inggeris.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 21. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris melalui penglihatan.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 22. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris melalui pendengaran.  | 4 3 2 1 |
| 23. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris melalui penglibatan dalam aktiviti-aktiviti yang berkaitan.           | 4 3 2 1 |
| 24. Di rumah, saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan membaca surat khabar dll.                            | 4 3 2 1 |
| 25. Di rumah, saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan menonton rancangan-rancangan Inggeris di televisyen. | 4 3 2 1 |



- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 26. Di rumah, saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan mendengar kaset.                       | 4 3 2 1 |
| 27. Di rumah, saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan membaca buku-buku Inggeris.            | 4 3 2 1 |
| 28. Saya suka belajar dengan bertutur dengan kawan-kawan dalam Bah. Inggeris.               | 4 3 2 1 |
| 29. Saya suka belajar dengan memerhati dan mendengar mereka yang fasih dalam Bah. Inggeris. | 4 3 2 1 |
| 30. Saya suka belajar Bah. Inggeris dengan menggunakannya dalam pergaulan harian.           | 4 3 2 1 |

## Soal-selidik 2 : Pendekatan Pembelajaran

Di bahagian ini, sila nyatakan setakat mana anda bersetuju dengan setiap kenyataan di bawah. Berjawab berhubung Pembelajaran secara am.

- 4 bermaksud 'sangat bersetuju'
- 3 bermaksud 'bersetuju'
- 2 bermaksud 'tidak bersetuju'
- 1 bermaksud 'sangat tidak bersetuju'

**Bulatkan nombor pilihan anda.**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Saya diserapkan ke pengajian tinggi dengan tidak memikirkan apa yang saya idamkan.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Tujuan utama saya berada di universiti ialah untuk mempelajari subjek yang saya minati.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Ide-ide yang terkandung di dalam buku rujukan dan petikan sentiasa membangkitkan pemikiran saya.                                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Cara yang terbaik bagi saya memahami makna sesuatu perkataan teknikal adalah untuk mengingat definasi yang terdapat dalam buku teks. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Tujuan utama saya memasuki universiti adalah untuk mendapat pekerjaan yang baik.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Semasa membaca buku atau sesuatu petikan, saya cuba memahami apa yang dimaksudkan.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Saya lebih suka diberitahu apa yang perlu dibuat dalam sesuatu tugas kerja.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Semasa kuliah, saya tidak pasti apa yang mustahak, maka saya cuba menyalin seberapa banyak yang boleh.             | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Saya sentiasa dapat memperolehi buku-buku atau bahan-bahan yang diperlukan untuk pembelajaran.                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Apabila diimbaz kembali, saya kadang-kadang tertanya-tanya kenapa saya memasuki universiti.                       | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Saya berusaha untuk memastikan saya menguasai fakta-fakta penting.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. Apabila membaca, saya meneliti fakta-fakta dengan cermat sebelum membuat kesimpulan mengenai apa yang dipelajari. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. Kadangkala saya berasa risau tentang samada saya berkeupayaan untuk mengikuti kursus dengan sempurna.             | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. Saya tahu apa yang saya inginkan daripada kursus ini dan saya berazam untuk mencapainya                           | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. Pada amnya, saya dapati tugas-tugas yang diberi mudah.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. Biasanya saya membaca sesuatu dengan tidak cuba memahaminya.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. Pada amnya, saya akan cuba sedaya upaya untuk memahami sesuatu saya anggap susah pada mulanya.                    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. Saya membuat kerja tugas sepanjang kursus dan tidak menunggu sehingga saat-saat terakhir.                         | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Saya menghabiskan banyak masa mengulang atau menyalin sesuatu untuk membantu saya mengingat apa yang telah dipelajari. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. Saya tidak akan menerima sesuatu yang diberitahu; tanpa memikirkan maksudnya.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. Saya cuba menggunakan masa siang hari dengan sepenuhnya.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. Saya mempunyai cara teratur dan sistematik untuk belajar.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. Semasa mempelajari sesuatu topik baru, saya menghadapi kesukaran memahami konsep dengan sepenuhnya.                    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. Pada keseluruhannya, saya boleh memahami apa yang dipelajari.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. Ada kalanya saya memikirkan ide-ide yang saya dapat dari kursus ini apabila melakukan kerja lain.                      | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. Saya memilih pengajian ini untuk memperolehi pekerjaan yang baik.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 27. Saya lebih suka kursus yang dirancang dan disusun dengan rapi.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28. Semasa membaca, saya meninjau konsep dengan teliti untuk melihat perkaitan ide dengan apa yang telah diajar.           | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 29. Saya berasa cemas jika ketinggalan dalam sesuatu kerja atau tugas.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30. Saya suka cabaran; saya dapati ia merangsangkan.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31. Saya memilih kursus yang boleh memenuhi kehendak pekerjaan walaupun bukan minat saya.                         | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 32. Walaupun saya boleh mengingat fakta-fakta dengan terperinci, saya biasanya tidak memahami sesuatu sepenuhnya. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 33. Sehingga kini, saya berjaya memahami perkara-perkara yang saya pelajari.                                      | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 34. Saya belajar dengan bersungguh-sungguh dan dapat menumpukan perhatian pada sesuatu tugas.                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35. Saya biasanya menghadapi masalah untuk memahami perkara yang perlu saya ingat.                                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 36. Saya mengikuti pengajian ini untuk memenuhi kehendak orang lain dan bukan kerana saya meminatinya.            | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 37. Biasanya saya dapati terlalu banyak bahan yang perlu dibelajari dalam kursus ini.                             | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 38. Saya cuba mengaitkan ide yang dipelajari didalam kursus ini dengan tajuk atau kursus lain yang saya ikuti.    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 39. Saya sentiasa menyemak jadual kursus untuk memastikan saya membaca bahan yang diperlukan.                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 40. Saya lebih berminat dengan kelayakan yang akan saya perolehi daripada menerokai isi kursus yang saya ikuti.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 41. Saya tidak menghadapi masalah memahami maklumat dan ide baru.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

### Soal-selidik 3: Persepsi Terhadap Kursus

#### Bahagian I

Di bahagian in, sila nyatakan setakat mana anda bersetuju dengan setiap kenyataan di bawah. Berjawab berhubung Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

- 4 bermaksud 'sangat bersetuju'
- 3 bermaksud 'bersetuju'
- 2 bermaksud 'tidak bersetuju'
- 1 bermaksud 'sangat tidak bersetuju'

Bulatkan nombor pilihan anda.

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Kebanyakan tenaga pengajar dari JKBI (Jabatan Kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris) sedia menerima cadangan dari kami untuk memperbaiki teknik mengajar dan bahan-bahan mengajar. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Sebagai pelajar saya menghadapi banyak tekanan.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Saya sentiasa tahu taraf kerja yang diperlukan.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. JKBI memberi peluang untuk kami memilih bahagian khusus yang ingin kami pelajari.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Tenaga pengajar dari JKBI sedia memberi pertolongan dan nasihat mengenai pendekatan belajar.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Saya sentiasa tahu matlamat saya dan apa yang diperlukan dari saya di JKBI ini.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Tenaga pengajar dari JKBI, pada amnya, memandang berat terhadap pendapat dan minat kami.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. JKBI memberi kami peluang untuk mengguna cara belajar yang sesuai untuk kami.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



9. Beban kerja dari JKBI terlalu berat.	4	3	2	1
10. Komponen mengajar/belajar yang ditawarkan oleh JKBI cukup untuk keperluan saya.	4	3	2	1
11. Tenaga pengajar dari JKBI bijak mengubah-suai pengajaran/bahan-bahan	4	3	2	1
12. Kebanyakan pengajar di JKBI cuba sedaya-upaya untuk berkenalan dengan kami.	4	3	2	1
13. Saya sering mengguna bahan pengajaran (yang termasuk buku teks, panduan kursus, panduan belajar, dan bahan pandang-dengar) yang di bekal oleh JKBI.	4	3	2	1
14. Terdapat terlalu banyak tugas bertulis sehingga tidak terdapat masa untuk saya membaca.	4	3	2	1
15. Tenaga pengajar biasanya memberitahu kami apa yang patut dipelajari.	4	3	2	1
16. Lebih banyak komponen mengajar/pelajar perlu dibekalkan.	4	3	2	1
17. Kami diberi banyak peluang dalam memilih tugas.	4	3	2	1
18. Kebanyakan tenaga pengajar membuat persiapan mengajar/bahan-bahan mengajar dengan teliti.	4	3	2	1
19. Tenaga pelajar sentiasa berbincang dengan pelajar bagaimana merancang kursus.	4	3	2	1
20. Komponen mengajar/belajar sangat berguna.	4	3	2	1
21. Kami mempunyai banyak pilihan untuk menentukan cara belajar yang sesuai.	4	3	2	1
22. Tenaga pengajar pada amnya memberitahu kami dari awalnya apa yang diharapkan.	4	3	2	1
23. Sukatan yang dipelajari mengandungi terlalu banyak tajuk.	4	3	2	1
24. Tenaga pengajar cuba sedaya upaya untuk memahami masalah yang dihadapi oleh kami.	4	3	2	1

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 42. Saya tidak banyak membaca lebih daripada apa yang dikehendaki untuk menyiapkan sesuatu tugas kerja.                 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 43. Saya menyusun masa belajar dengan teliti untuk mendapat faedah maksima.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 44. Semasa mempelajari sesuatu tajuk baru, saya cuba mengait ide-ide yang ada dan melihat kesinambungannya.             | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 45. Adalah penting bagi saya untuk merasa yang saya boleh mengikuti kursus-kursus dengan sebaik mungkin.                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 46. Biasanya saya cuba memahami apa yang perlu saya pelajari  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 47. Saya dapati saya perlu menghafal kebanyakan perkara yang saya perlu   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 48. Memasuki universiti bukan pilihan saya tetapi untuk memenuhi kehendak orang lain dan disebabkan tiada pilihan lain. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 49. Saya biasanya berasa risau dengan kerja tugas yang saya fikir saya tidak dapat siapkan.                             | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 50. Saya pastikan keadaan sesuai untuk pembelajaran supaya tugas dapat dibuat dengan mudah.                             | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 51. Semasa membuat sesuatu tugas, saya cuba ingat apa yang dikehendaki oleh guru.                                       | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 52. Saya biasanya tidak memikirkan mengenai implikasi dalam apa yang telah saya baca.                                   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 53. Adalah penting untuk saya memahami hujah-hujah dalam sesuatu perkara.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |



## Appendix 6B

### **Revisions made to Willing's questionnaire and reasons for the changes.**

All Willing's questions were used except for the following two:

Q 7 I like to have my own textbook.

Q 45 I try to understand the Australian way of life.

I felt that Question 7 could not be considered as a type of classroom activity in the same manner as the rest of the questions (i.e. questions 1-6). In replacement I came up with the following question which I felt was a more appropriate classroom activity.

Q7 In English class, I like to learn by listening to lectures.

As for question 45, it was left out because it was unsuitable for my sample population

The questions I revised and the reasons for doing so are given in the figure in the following page.

Original version	Revised version	Reason for change
2. In class, I like to listen and use cassettes.	2. In English class, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.	revised version sufficiently conveys the desired meaning.
3. In class, I like to learn by games.	3. In class, I like to learn by taking part in activities.	revised version is less awkward and covers a wider scope.
4. In class, I like to learn by conversations.	4. In English class, I like to learn by taking part in conversations and discussions.	revised version is less awkward and covers a wider scope.
5. In class, I learn by pictures, films and videos.	5. In English class, I like to learn by viewing pictures, films and videos.	revised version is less awkward.
6. I want to write everything in my notebook.	6. In English class, I like to learn by taking down notes.	revised version describes a type of learning activity whereas the original doesn't seem to.
20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation.	20. I like to practise the sounds and pronunciation of English words.	revised version is more specific.
26. At home, I like to learn by using cassettes.	26. At home, I like to learn by listening to cassettes.	revised version is clearer.
28. I like to learn by talking to friends in English.	28. I like to English by talking to friends.	revised version is more specific.
29. I like to learn by watching, listening to Australians.	29. I like to learn by watching and listening to people proficient in English.	revised version is more appropriate for the Malaysian context.
30. I like to learn by using English in shops/CES trains.	30. I like to learn English by using it in my daily life.	revised version is more appropriate for the Malaysian context.



Appendix 6C

Discipline\*Proficiency\*Learning Styles Crosstabulation for distance learners

Discipline	Proficiency level	'analytical-communicative learners'		'communicative-authority-oriented learners'		'pseudo-authority-oriented learners'		'pseudo-concrete learners'	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Soc. Sc.	Low	34	35.8	43	45.3	4	4.2	14	14.7
	Average	17	50.0	12	35.5	3	8.8	2	5.9
	High	9	56.3	4	25.0	2	12.5	1	6.3
Appl.Sc.	Low	12	52.2	2	8.7	4	17.4	5	21.7
	Average	10	50.0	5	25.0	2	10.0	3	15.0
	High	4	57.1	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0
Bus.Adm.	Low	28	42.4	28	42.4	6	9.1	4	6.1
	Average	18	46.2	15	38.5	1	2.6	5	12.8
	High	10	62.5	4	25.0	1	6.3	1	6.3

## Appendix 6D

### Discipline\*Proficiency\*Learning Styles Crosstabulation for on-campus learners

Discipline	Proficiency level	'analytical-communicative learners'		'communicative-authority-oriented learners'		'pseudo-authority-oriented learners'		'pseudo-concrete learners'	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Soc.Sc.	Low	8	25.8	9	29.0	12	38.7	2	6.5
	Average	11	47.8	7	30.4	3	13.0	2	8.7
	High	8	40.0	6	30.0	3	15.0	3	15.0
Appl. Sc.	Low	14	32.6	17	39.5	10	23.3	2	4.7
	Average	12	19.7	24	39.3	13	21.3	12	19.7
	High	8	22.2	15	41.7	7	19.4	6	16.7
Bus.Adm.	Low	15	32.6	12	26.1	10	21.7	9	19.6
	Average	19	38.0	14	28.0	11	22.0	6	12.0
	High	23	38.3	25	41.7	11	18.3	1	1.7



# Appendix 7A

## Factor loadings of study strategy scales of Entwistle and Ramsden's second inventory (1983:39)

Sub-scale	I	II	III	IV
Deep approach	62		33	
Comprehension learning	73			
Intrinsic motivation	54		47	
Internality	61			
Openness	50			
Surface approach		67		
Operation learning		67		
Extrinsic motivation		61		
Fear of failure		36		-32
Syllabus-boundness	-41	50		
Strategic approach				
Organised study methods			64	
Achievement motivation			45	
Disillusioned attitudes			-55	
Sociability				58

Note: A negative sign indicates that the direction has to be reversed (For example, Factor I is associated with the reverse of syllabus- boundedness, which is syllabus-freedom).

## Appendix 7B

### Meanings of the subscales of the Approaches to studying Inventory (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983:180)

Subscale	Meaning
Deep approach	Active questioning in learning
Relating ideas	Relating to other parts of course
Use of evidence	Relating evidence to conclusions
Intrinsic motivation	Interest in learning for learning's sake
Surface approach	Preoccupation with memorisation
Syllabus-boundedness	Relying on staff to define learning tasks
Fear of failure	Pessimism and anxiety about academic outcomes
Extrinsic motivation	Interest in courses for the qualifications they offer
Strategic approach	Awareness of implications of academic demands made by staff
Disorganised study methods	Unable to work regularly and effectively
Negative attitudes to studying	Lack of interest and application
Achievement motivation	Competitive and confident
Comprehension learning	Readiness to map out subject area and think divergently
Globetrotting	Over-ready to jump to conclusions
Operation learning	Emphasis on facts and logical analysis
Improvidence	Over-cautious reliance on details



## Appendix 7C

### A model of styles and approaches to studying (by Entwistle, Hanley and Hounsell, 1979)

Approach or Style	Process		Outcome
	Stage I	Stage II	
Deep approach/ Versatile	All four processes below used appropriately to reach understanding		Deep level of understanding
Comprehension Learning	Building overall description of content area	Reorganising incoming Information to relate to previous knowledge or experience and establishing personal meaning	Incomplete understanding attributable to globetrotting
Operation learning	Detailed attention to evidence and steps in the argument	Relating evidence to conclusion and maintaining a critical, objective stance	Incomplete understanding attributable to providence
Surface approach	Memorisation	Overlearning	Surface level of understanding

## Appendix 7D

### Items contained in the final version of the approaches to studying inventory (ASI) (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983)

MEANING ORIENTATION		Corrected* item-scale total correlation
<i>Deep Approach (Cronbach Alpha = 0.56)</i>		
DA1	I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult	0.38
DA2	I often find myself questioning things that I hear in lectures or read in books	0.30
DA3	I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read.	0.37
DA4	When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer	0.33
<i>Relating Ideas (0.47)</i>		
RI1	I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in others, whenever possible	0.31
RI2	In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply	0.24
RI3	I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper	0.20
RI4	I find it helpful to 'map out' a new topic for myself by seeing how the ideas fit together	0.30
<i>Use of Evidence (0.38)</i>		
UE1	In reporting practical work, I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting the findings	0.23
UE2	I am usually cautious in drawing conclusions unless they are well supported by evidence	0.13

---

\* Corrected to remove contribution of that item to scale total

*Use of Evidence (Q.38) (continued)*

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| UE3 | Puzzles or problems fascinate me, particularly where you have to work through the material to reach a logical conclusion                | 0.19 |
| UE4 | When I'm reading an article or research report I generally examine the evidence carefully to decide whether the conclusion is justified | 0.27 |

*Intrinsic Motivation (0.72)*

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| IM1 | My main reason for being here is so that I can learn more about the subjects which really interest me                  | 0.49 |
| IM2 | I find that studying academic topics can often be really exciting and gripping   | 0.55 |
| IM3 | I spend a good deal of my spare time in finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in classes | 0.44 |
| IM4 | I find academic topics so interesting, I should like to continue with them after I finish this course                  | 0.56 |

REPRODUCING ORIENTATION

*Surface Approach (0.49)*

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| SA1 | Lecturers seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated                       | 0.21 |
| SA2 | I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn                      | 0.32 |
| SA3 | When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later                    | 0.13 |
| SA4 | The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions | 0.24 |
| SA5 | I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read                        | 0.28 |
| SA6 | Often I find I have read things without having a chance to really understand them                    | 0.32 |

*Syllabus-Boundness (0.51)*

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| SB1 | I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments        | 0.38 |
| SB2 | I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised               | 0.33 |
| SB3 | I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments | 0.27 |

*Fear of Failure (0.45)*

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| FF1 | The continual pressure of work-assignments, deadlines and competition often makes me tense and depressed | 0.30 |
| FF2 | A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic  | 0.30 |
| FF3 | Having to speak in tutorials is quite an ordeal for me   | 0.22 |



*Achievement Motivation (Q 58)*

AM1	I enjoy competition: I find it stimulating	0.43
AM2	It's important to me to do really well in the courses here	0.32
AM3	It is important to me to do things better than my friends	0.48
AM4	I hate admitting defeat, even in trivial matters	0.25

STYLES AND PATHOLOGIES OF LEARNING

*Comprehension Learning (Q 65)*

CL1	Ideas in books often set me off on long chains of thought of my own, only tenuously related to what I was reading	0.45
CL2	In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution	0.39

*Comprehension Learning (Q 65) (continued)*

CL3	I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far	0.47
CL4	Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own	0.41

*Globetrotting (Q 36)*

GT1	Although I have a fairly good general idea of many things, my knowledge of the details is rather weak	0.13
GT2	In trying to understand new topics, I often explain them to myself in ways that other people don't seem to follow	0.16
GT3	I often get criticised for introducing irrelevant material into my essays or tutorials	0.25
GT4	I seem to be a bit too ready to jump to conclusions without waiting for all the evidence	0.24

*Operation Learning (Q 49)*

OL1	I generally prefer to tackle each part of a topic or problem in order, working out one at a time	0.32
OL2	I prefer to follow well tried out approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous	0.29
OL3	I find it better to start straight away with the details of a new topic and build up an overall picture in that way	0.18
OL4	I think it is important to look at problems rationally and logically without making intuitive jumps	0.34

*Extrinsic Motivation (Q 78)*

EM1	I chose my present courses mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards	0.63
EM2	My main reason for being here is that it will help me to get a better job	0.67
EM3	I generally choose courses more from the way they fit in with career plans than from my own interests	0.58
EM4	I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking	0.46

**ACHIEVING ORIENTATION**

*Strategic Approach (Q 32)*

ST1	Lecturers sometimes give indications of what is likely to come up in exams, so I look out for what may be hints	0.16
ST2	When I'm doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular lecturer seems to want	0.16
ST3	If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do something to change them	0.18
ST4	One way or another I manage to get hold of the books I need for studying	0.16

*Disorganised Study Methods (Q 71) (reversed scoring)*

DS1	I find it difficult to organise my study time effectively	0.52
DS2	My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of term	0.50
DS3	Distractions make it difficult for me to do much effective work in the evenings	0.46
DS4	I'm rather slow at starting work in the evenings	0.52

*Negative Attitudes to Studying (Q 60) (reversed scoring)*

NA1	Often I find myself wondering whether the work I am doing here is really worthwhile	0.44
NA2	Continuing my education was something which happened to me, rather than something I really wanted for myself	0.37
NA3	When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to come here	0.48
NA4	I certainly want to pass the next set of exams, but it doesn't really matter if I only just scrape through	0.25

*Improvvidence (Q.42)*

- |     |  |        |
|-----|--|--------|
| IP1 | Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to fit them together into an overall picture              | - 0.25 |
| IP2 | I find it difficult to "switch tracks" when working on a problem: I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go | 0.19   |

*Improvvidence (Q.42) (continued)*

- |     |  |      |
|-----|--|------|
| IP3 | Tutors seem to want me to be more adventurous in making use of my own ideas                              | 0.22 |
| IP4 | I find I tend to remember things best if I concentrate on the order in which the lecturer presented them | 0.26 |



## Appendix 7E

### Correlations between approaches to studying and indices of academic progress in Britain and Australia (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983)

	Arts		Social Sci.		Science		British
	Brit (N=491)	Aus (295)	Brit (852)	Aus (89)	Brit (865)	Aus (156)	Total (2208)
'A' Level Grades	15	-	10	-	24	-	
Meaning Orientation							24
Deep Approach	30	11	23	11	21	15	12
Relating Ideas	07	07	19	12	10	-08	15
Use of Evidence	16	07	17	12	13	02	26
Intrinsic Motivation	26	21	31	16	24	13	
Reproducing Orientation							-19
Surface Approach	-27	-22	-13	-27	-20	-23	-22
Syllabus-boundness	-34	-17	-24	-06	-14	-07	-18
Fear of Failure	-25	-10	-15	-14	-15	-12	-09
Extrinsic Motivation	-13	-22	-09	-07	-06	-04	
Achieving Orientation							19
Strategic Approach	09	02	20	09	27	00	-32
Disorganized Study Methods	-22	-18	-34	-27	-37	-34	-29
Negative Attitudes to Studying	-26	-25	-33	-23	-30	-30	20
Achievement Motivation	16	04	25	18	20	28	
Styles and Pathologies							08
Comprehension Learning	15	03	08	16	05	00	-16
Globetrotting	-18	-25	-11	-03	-19	-19	-04
Operation Learning	-16	-09	-03	-03	06	-12	-15
Improvvidence	-23	-10	-06	-18	-17	-27	.06
Significant for $r^2$	.12	.15	.09	.27	.09	.21	-
Multiple Correlation	-	.41	-	.47	-	.54	

## Appendix 8A

### Items of the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (RASI) (Entwistle and Tait, 1994)

Item No.	Item wording
<b>Subgroup: Deep Approach (10 items)</b>	
<i>Looking for meaning</i>	
30	I usually set out to understand for myself the meaning of what we have to learn.
19	When I'm reading an article or book, I try to work out for myself exactly what's being said.
<i>Active interest/critical stance</i>	
5	Sometimes I find myself thinking about ideas from the course when I'm doing other things.
1	I'm not prepared just to accept things I'm told; I have to think them out for myself.
<i>Relating and organising ideas</i>	
13	I try to relate ideas I come across to other topics or other courses whenever possible.
25	When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together.
28	Ideas in course books or articles often set me off on long chains of thought about what I'm reading.
<i>Using evidence and logic</i>	
38	I look at the evidence carefully and then try to reach my own conclusions about things I'm studying.
32	When I'm reading, I examine the details carefully to see how they fit in with what's being said.
35	It's important for me to be able to follow the argument or see the reasoning behind something.
<b>Subgroup: Surface Approach (10 items)</b>	
<i>Relying on memorising</i>	
26	I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what I have to learn.
20	I spend quite a lot of time repeating or copying out things to help me remember them.
<i>Difficulty in making sense</i>	
22	Often I find myself reading things without really trying to understand them.
6	I often have trouble in making sense of the things I have to remember.
<i>Unrelatedness</i>	
9	Although I can remember facts and details, I often can't see any overall picture.
23	I'm not really sure what's important, so I try to get down just as much as I can in lectures.

*Concern about coping*

- 17 Sometimes I worry about whether I'll ever be able to cope with the work properly.
- 3 Often I feel I'm drowning in the sheer amount of material we're having to cope with on this course.
- 33 I often seem to panic if I get behind with my work.
- 7 Often I lie awake worrying about work I think I won't be able to do.

**Subgroup: Strategic Approach (10 items)**

*Determination to excel*

- 27 It's important to me to feel I'm doing as well as I really can in the courses here.
- 21 I know what I want to get out of this course and I'm determined to achieve it.

*Effort in studying*

- 14 I put a lot of effort into making sure I have the most important details at my finger tips.
- 24 I work hard when I'm studying and generally manage to keep my mind on what I'm doing.

*Organised studying*

- 10 I make sure I find conditions for studying which let me get on with my work easily.
- 2 One way or another I manage to get hold of books or whatever I need for studying.
- 31 I think I'm quite systematic and organised in the way I go about studying.

*Time management*

- 18 I organise my study time carefully to make the best use of it.
- 34 I generally try to make use of my time during the day.
- 37 I work steadily throughout the course, rather than leaving everything until the last minute.

**Subgroup: Lack of Direction (4 items)**

- 29 I rather drifted into higher education without deciding for myself what I really wanted to do.
- 36 I think I'm on this course more to please other people than because I really wanted it myself.
- 11 When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to come here.
- 15 Coming here wasn't really my choice: more other people's expectations and no obvious alternative.

**Subgroup: Academic Self-Confidence (4 items)**

- 4 So far, I seem to have a good grasp of the subjects I'm studying.
- 8 Generally, I find the set work easy to do.
- 16 I don't usually have much difficulty in making sense of new information or ideas.
- 12 I seem to be able to grasp things for myself pretty well on the whole.

*Notes*

1. The subgroup, Deep Approach, contains items 1, 5, 13, 19, 25, 28, 30, 32, 35 and 38. All items are scored in a positive sense.
2. The subgroup, Surface Approach, contains items 3, 6, 7, 9, 17, 20, 22, 23, 26 and 33. All items are scored in a negative sense; that is, these items are reverse scored.
3. The subgroup, Strategic Approach, contains items 2, 10, 14, 18, 21, 24, 27, 34 and 37. All items are scored in a positive sense.
4. The subgroup, Lack of Direction, contains items 11, 15, 29 and 36. Items 29 and 36 are reverse scored.
5. The subgroup, Academic Self-Confidence, contains items 4, 8, 12 and 16. All items are scored in a positive sense.



## Appendix 8B

### Comparison of the composition of RASI and NASI and the explanation of changes undertaken

The RASI	The NASI
<b>Scale 1: Deep Approach</b>  <b>Subscale 1: Looking for Meaning</b>  30. I usually set out to understand for myself the meaning of what we have to learn.  19. When I'm reading an article or book, I try to work out for myself exactly what's being said.	<b>Scale 1: Deep Approach</b>  <b>Subscale 1: Looking for Meaning</b>  46. I usually set out to understand for myself the meaning of what we have to learn.  6. When I'm reading an article or book, I try to work out for myself exactly what's being said.  17. I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand what initially seem difficult.
<b>Subscale II : Active Interest/Critical stance</b>  5. Sometimes I find myself thinking of ideas from the course when I'm doing other things.  1. I'm not prepared just to accept things I'm told; I have to think them out myself.	<b>Subscale II : Active Interest/Critical stance</b>  25. Sometimes I find myself thinking of ideas from the course when I'm doing other things.  19. I'm not prepared just to accept things I'm told; I have to think them out myself.  2. My main reason for being in university is to learn more about subjects that interest me.
<b>Scale III: Relating and Organising Ideas</b>  13. I try to relate ideas I come across to other topics or other courses wherever possible.  25. When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together.  28. Ideas in course books or articles often set me off on long chains of thoughts about what I' reading.	<b>Scale III: Relating and Organising Ideas</b>  38. I try to relate ideas I come across to other topics or other courses wherever possible.  44. When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together.  3. Ideas in course books or articles often set me off on long chains of thoughts about what I' reading.

Subscale IV: Using Evidence and Logic	Subscale IV: Using Evidence and Logic
38. I look at the evidence carefully and then try to reach my own conclusions about things I'm studying.	12. I look at the evidence carefully and then try to reach my own conclusions about things I'm studying.
32. When I'm reading, I examine the details carefully to see how they fit in with what's being said.	28. When I'm reading, I examine the details carefully to see how they fit in with what's being said.
35. It's important for me to be able to follow the argument to see the reasoning behind something.	53. It's important for me to be able to follow the argument to see the reasoning behind something.

Fig. A8.1 Comparison of Scale 1 of the RASI and the Revised Version of the RASI

Fig. A8.1 shows the changes made to Scale 1 of the RASI. As can be seen from the Figure, ‘ I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult’ (which was from the ASI) was added to Subscale I. The emphasis in this item was on ‘something that initially seem difficult’, which had not been mentioned by the other two items. ‘My main reason for being in University is to learn more about subjects that really interest me’ (from ASI) was added to Subscale II since its focus was on an issue not considered by the other two items. No items were added to Subscale III and IV as there were sufficient number of items in these categories.

The RASI	The NASI
<p><b>Scale 2: Surface Approach</b></p> <p><b>Subscale 1: Relying on Memorising</b></p> <p>26. I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what I have to learn.</p> <p>20. I spend quite a lot of time repeating or copying out things to help me remember them.</p>	<p><b>Scale 2: Surface Approach</b></p> <p><b>Subscale 1: Relying on Memorising</b></p> <p>47. I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what I have to learn.</p> <p>20. I spend quite a lot of time repeating or copying out things to help me remember them.</p> <p>4. The best way for me to understand the meaning of technical terms is to remember the textbook definitions.</p>

<b>Subscale II : Difficulty in making sense</b>  22. Often I find myself reading things without really trying to understand them.  6. I often have troubles in making sense of the things I have to remember.	<b>Subscale II : Difficulty in making sense</b>  16. Often I find myself reading things without really trying to understand them.  35. I often have troubles in making sense of the things I have to remember.  52. I usually don't think about the implications of what I have to read.
<b>Subscale III: Unrelatedness</b>  9. Although I can remember facts and details, I often can't see any overall picture.  23. I'm not really sure what's important, so I try to get down just as much as I can in lectures.	<b>Subscale III: Unrelatedness</b>  32. Although I can remember facts and details, I often can't see any overall picture.  7. I'm not really sure what's important, so I try to get down just as much as I can in lectures.  23. When learning a new topic, I find it difficult to see how the ideas fit together.
<b>Subscale IV: Concerning about coping</b>  17. Sometimes I worry about whether I'll ever be able to cope with the work properly.  3. Often I feel I'm drowning in the sheer amount of material we're having to cope with on the course.  33. I often seem to panic if I get behind in my work.  7. Often I lie awake worrying about work I won't be able to do.	<b>Subscale IV: Concerning about coping</b>  13. Sometimes I worry about whether I'll ever be able to cope with the work properly.  37. Often I feel I'm drowning in the sheer amount of material we're having to cope with on the course.  29. I often seem to panic if I get behind in my work.  49. Often I lie awake worrying about work I won't be able to do.

Fig.A8.2 Comparison of Scale 2 of the RASI and the Revised Version of the RASI.

Fig.A8.2 shows the changes made to Scale 2 of the RASI. 'The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions' (from the ASI ) was added to Subscale I as this aspect had not been sufficiently covered by the other two items. For the same reason 'I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read' (from the ASI in Subscale II) was added to subscale II.



For Subscale III, since there were only two items, an extra item, very pertinent to the issue of unrelatedness, i.e. 'When learning a new topic, I find it difficult to see how the ideas fit together.' was added. As for subscale IV, the four items given sufficiently covered the scope and hence there was no necessity to add any more.

The RASI	The NASI
<b>Scale 3: Strategic Approach</b>  <b>Subscale 1: Determination to excel</b>  27. It's important to feel I'm doing as well as I really can in the courses here.  21. I know what I want to get out of this course and I'm determined to achieve it.	<b>Scale 3: Strategic Approach</b>  <b>Subscale 1: Determination to excel</b>  45. It's important to feel I'm doing as well as I really can in the courses here.  14. I know what i want to get out of this course and I'm determined to achieve it.  30. I enjoy competition; I find it stimulating.
<b>Subscale II : Effort in studying</b>  14. I put a lot of effort into making sure I have the most important details at my finger tips.  24. I work hard when I'm studying and generally manage to keep my mind on what I'm doing.	<b>Subscale II : Effort in studying</b>  11. I put a lot of effort into making sure I have the most important details at my finger tips.  34. I work hard when I'm studying and generally manage to keep my mind on what I'm doing.  51. When I'm doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind exactly what it particularly wants.
<b>Subscale III: Organised studying</b>  10. I make sure I find conditions for studying which let me get on with my work easily.  2. One way or another I manage to gethold of books or whatever I need for studying.  31. I think I'm quite systematic and organised in the way I go about studying.	<b>Subscale III: Organised studying</b>  50. I make sure I find conditions for studying which let me get on with my work easily.  9. One way or another I manage to gethold of books or whatever I need for studying.  22. I think I'm quite systematic and organised in the way I go about studying.
<b>Subscale IV: Time Management</b>  18. I organise my study time carefully to make the best use of it.  34. I generally try to make use of my time during the day  37. I work steadily throughout the course, rather than leaving everything until the last minute.	<b>Subscale IV: Time Management</b>  43. I organise my study time carefully to make the best use of it.  21. I generally try to make use of my time during the day  18. I work steadily throughout the course, rather than leaving everything until the last minute.

Fig.A8.3 Comparison of Scale 3 of the RASI and the Revised Version of the RASI.

Fig.A8.3 shows the changes made to Scale 3 of the RASI. ‘I enjoy competition: I find it stimulating’ ( from the ASI) was added into Subscale I as it covered an area not dealt with by the other two items. ‘When I’m doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular teacher wants’ (from ASI) was added to Subscale II for the same reason. No items were added to Subscale III and IV since sufficient items had been given.

### Other Scales

The RASI	The NASI
<p><b>Scale 4: Lack of direction</b></p> <p>29. I rather drifted into higher education without deciding for myself what I really wanted to do.</p> <p>36. I think I'm on this course more to please others than because I really wanted it myself.</p> <p>15. Coming here wasn't really my choice: more other people's expectations and no obvious alternative.</p> <p>11. When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to come here.</p>	<p><b>Scale 4: Lack of direction</b></p> <p>1. I rather drifted into higher education without deciding for myself what I really wanted to do.</p> <p>36. I think I'm on this course more to please others than because I really wanted it myself.</p> <p>48. Coming here wasn't really my choice: more other people's expectations and no obvious alternative.</p> <p>10. When I look back, I sometimes wonder why I ever decided to come here.</p>
<p><b>Scale 5: Academic self-confidence</b></p> <p>4. So far, I seem to have a good grasp of the subjects I'm studying.</p> <p>8. Generally, I find the set work easy to do.</p> <p>16. I don't usually have much difficulty inmaking sense of new information or new ideas.</p> <p>12. I seem to be able to grasp things for myself pretty well on the whole.</p>	<p><b>Scale 5: Academic self-confidence</b></p> <p>33. So far, I seem to have a good grasp of the subjects I'm studying.</p> <p>15. Generally, I find the set work easy to do.</p> <p>41. I don't usually have much difficulty inmaking sense of new information or new ideas.</p> <p>24. I seem to be able to grasp things for myself pretty well on the whole.</p>

	<p><b>Scale 6: Syllabus-boundedness</b></p> <p>8. I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments.</p> <p>27. I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised.</p> <p>42. I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments.</p> <p>39. I constantly check the course schedule to make sure I'm reading what is required of me.</p>
	<p><b>Scale 7: Extrinsic Motivation</b></p> <p>26. I chose my present courses mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards.</p> <p>5. My main reason for being here is that it will help me to get a better job.</p> <p>31. I generally choose courses more from the way they fit in with my career plans than from my own interests.</p> <p>40. I supposed I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking.</p>

Fig.A8.4 Comparison of the other Scales of the RASI and the Revised Version of the RASI.

Fig.A8.4 shows the changes made to the other Scales of the RASI. As can be seen, Scale 4:Lack of Direction and Scale 5:Academic Self-Confidence were maintained and two other scales i.e. Scale 6:Syllabus-boundedness and Scale 7:Extrinsic Motivation were added. Syllabus-boundedness was added as a separate group. An extra item particularly relevant to distance learners was added to this subscale: 'I constantly check the course schedule to make sure I am reading what is required of me'. Extrinsic motivation was also included as a separate group in NASI. The items in it were taken from ASI.



## Appendix 9A

### Items contained in the final version of the Course Perceptions Questionnaire (CPQ) (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983)

		Corrected item-scale correlation
<i>Formal teaching methods (alpha = 0.70)</i>		
FT1	A great deal of my time is taken up by timetabled classes (lectures, practicals, tutorials, etc)	0.49
FT2	You can learn nearly everything you need to know from the classes and lectures; it isn't necessary to do much further reading	0.56
FT3	In this department you're expected to spend a lot of time studying on your own *	0.38
FT4	Lectures in this department are basically a guide to reading *	0.44
FT5	Lectures seem to be more important than tutorials or discussion groups in this department	0.43
<i>Clear goals and standards (0.76)</i>		
CG1	You usually have a clear idea of where you're going and what's expected of you in this department	0.54
CG2	It's always easy here to know the standard of work expected of you	0.60
CG3	It's hard to know how well you're doing in the courses here *	0.42
CG4	Lecturers here usually tell students exactly what they are supposed to be learning	0.50
CG5	Lecturers here generally make it clear right from the start what will be required of students	0.58
<i>Workload (0.80)</i>		
WL1	The workload here is too heavy	0.54
WL2	It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too many topics	0.19
WL3	There is so much written work to be done that it is very difficult to get down to independent reading	0.29

\* reversed scoring

*Workload (Q.8 Q) (continued)*

WL4	There seems to be too much work to get through in the courses here	0.53
WL5	There's a lot of pressure on you as a student here	0.39

*Vocational Relevance (Q.78)*

VR1	The courses in this department are geared to students' future employment	0.50
VR2	Lecturers in this department are keen to point out that they are giving us a professional training	0.34
VR3	The courses here seem to be pretty well determined by vocational requirements	0.50
VR4	The work I do here will definitely improve my future employment prospects	0.19
VR5	There seems to be considerable emphasis here on inculcating the 'right' professional attitudes	0.27

*Good teaching (Q.67)*

GT1	Lecturers here frequently give the impression that they haven't anything to learn from students *	0.32
GT2	Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching very thoroughly	0.40
GT3	Lecturers in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching at the right level for us	0.42
GT4	Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work	0.49
GT5	The lecturers in this department always seem ready to give help and advice on approaches to studying	0.47

*Freedom in Learning (Q.72)*

FL1	There is a real opportunity in this department for students to choose the particular areas they want to study	0.48
-----	---	------

---

\* reversed scoring

*Freedom in Learning (Q.72) (continued)*

FL2	The department really seems to encourage us to develop our own academic interests as far as possible	0.38
FL3	We seem to be given a lot of choice here in the work we have to do	0.55
FL4	This department gives you a chance to use methods of study which suit your own way of learning	0.45
FL5	Students have a great deal of choice over how they are going to learn in this department	0.53

*Openness to students (Q.70)*

OS1	Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from students for changes to their teaching methods	0.43
OS2	Staff generally consult students before making decisions about how the courses are organized	0.36
OS3	Most of the lecturers here really try hard to get to know students	0.53
OS4	Lecturers in this department seem to go out of their way to be friendly towards students	0.51
OS5	Lecturers in this department generally take students' ideas and interests seriously	0.47

*Social climate (Q.65)*

SC1	A lot of the students in this department are friends of mine	0.40
SC2	Students from this department often get together socially	0.49
SC3	This department seems to foster a friendly climate which helps students to get to know each other	0.53
SC4	This department organizes meetings and talks which are usually well attended	0.25
SC5	Students in this department frequently discuss their work with each other	0.36



## Appendix 9B

### Modifications to the CPQ and reasons for the changes

Three main types of changes to the CPQ were undertaken. They were:

1. trimming of the questionnaire by rewording inappropriate or inconsistent words, rephrasing unwieldy items and removing repetitive items.
2. deleting repetitive/unsuitable questions
3. removing three groups i.e. 'Formal Teaching Methods', 'Vocational Relevance' and 'Social Climate' and adding in an extra group i.e. 'Teaching/Learning Components'.

All the above changes are shown Fig. A9.1 which presents a comparison of the scales of the CPQ and the NCPQ.

Fig. A9.1 A comparison of the scales of the CPQ and the NCPQ.

Scale	Items in CPQ	Items in NCPQ
I. Clear Goals and Standard	<p>4. <u>You</u> usually have a clear idea of where <u>you're</u> going and what is expected of <u>you</u> in <u>your</u> department.</p> <p>12. It's always easy here to know the standard of work expected of <u>you</u>.</p> <p>20. It's hard to know how well <u>you're</u> doing in the courses here.</p> <p>28. <u>Lecturers</u> here usually tell <u>students</u> exactly what <u>they</u> are supposed to be learning.</p> <p>38. <u>Lecturers</u> here generally make it clear right from the start what will be required of <u>students</u>.</p>	<p>6. <u>I</u> usually have a clear idea of where <u>I</u> am going and what's expected of <u>me</u> in this department.</p> <p>3. It's always easy here to know the standard of work expected of <u>me</u>.</p> <p>This question was left out.</p> <p>15. <u>Teachers</u> here usually tell <u>us</u> exactly what <u>we</u> are supposed to be learning.</p> <p>22. <u>Teacher</u> here generally make it clear right from the start what will be required of <u>us</u>.</p>
II. Workload	<p>6. The workload here is too heavy.</p> <p>14. It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too many topics.</p> <p>22. There are so much written work to be done that it is very difficult to get down to independent reading.</p> <p>30. There seems to be too much work to get through in the courses here.</p> <p>36. There 's a lot of pressure on <u>you</u> as a student.</p>	<p>9. The workload here is too heavy.</p> <p>23. It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too many topics.</p> <p>14. There is so much written work to be done that it is very difficult to get down to independent reading.</p> <p>This question was left out.</p> <p>2. There's a lot of pressure on <u>me</u> as a student here</p>
III. Good Teaching	<p>3. Lecturer have frequently give the impression that they haven't anything to learn from students.</p> <p>11. Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching very thoroughly.</p> <p>19. <u>Lecturers</u> in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching at</p>	<p>This question was left out</p> <p>18. Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching/materials very thoroughly.</p> <p>11. <u>Teachers</u> in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching/</p>

	<p>the right level for us.</p> <p>27. Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties <u>students</u> may be having with their work.</p> <p>35. The <u>lecturers</u> in this department always seem ready to give help and advice on approaches to studying.</p>	<p>materials at the right level for us.</p> <p>24. Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties <u>we</u> may be having with our work.</p> <p>5. The <u>teachers</u> in this department always seem ready to give help and advice on approaches to studying.</p>
IV. Freedom in Learning	<p>2. There is a real opportunity in this department for <u>students</u> to choose areas <u>they</u> want to study.</p> <p>10. The department really seems to encourage us to develop our own academic interests as far as possible.</p> <p>18. We seem to be given a lot of choice here in the work we have to do.</p> <p>26. This department gives <u>you</u> a chance to use methods of study which suit <u>your</u> own way of learning.</p> <p>34. <u>Students</u> have a great deal of choice over how <u>they</u> are going to learn in this department.</p>	<p>17. There is a real opportunity in this department for <u>us</u> to choose the particular areas <u>we</u> want to study.</p> <p>This question was left out.</p> <p>4. We seem to be given a lot of choice here in the work we have to do.</p> <p>8. This department gives <u>us</u> a chance to use methods of study which suit <u>our</u> own way of learning.</p> <p>21. <u>We</u> have a great deal of choice over how <u>we</u> are going to learn in this department.</p>
V. Openness to students	<p>7. Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from <u>students</u> for changes to their teaching methods.</p> <p>15. Staff generally consult <u>students</u> before making decisions about how the courses are organised.</p> <p>23. Most of the <u>lecturers</u> here really try hard to get to know <u>students</u>.</p> <p>31. Lecturers in this department seem to go out of their way to be friendly towards students.</p> <p>40. <u>Lecturers</u> in this department generally take <u>students'</u> ideas and interest seriously.</p>	<p>1. Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from <u>us</u> for changes to their teaching methods.</p> <p>7. Staff generally consult <u>us</u> before making decisions about how the courses are organised.</p> <p>12. Most of the <u>teachers</u> here really try hard to get to know <u>us</u>.</p> <p>This question was left out.</p> <p>19. <u>Teachers</u> in this department generally take <u>our</u> ideas and interest seriously.</p>



VI. Teaching/ Learning Components		<p>10. The teaching/learning components offered by the department is sufficient for my purpose.</p> <p>13. I utilise the teaching materials (which include text, course guide, study guide, audion and video materials – whichever are relevant) provided by the department extensively.</p> <p>16. A greater variety of teaching/learning components should be provided.</p> <p>20. The teaching/learning components are very helpful.</p>
VII. Social Climate	<p>5. A lot of students in this department are friends of mine.</p> <p>13. Students from this department often get together socially.</p> <p>21. This department seems to foster a friendly climate which helps students to get to know each other.</p> <p>29. This department organises meetings and talks which are usually well-attended.</p> <p>37. Students in this department frequently discuss their work with each other.</p>	<p>This section was left out.</p>
VIII. Formal Teaching Methods	<p>1. A great deal of my time is taken up by timetabled classes(lectures, practicals, tutorials, etc.</p> <p>9. You can learn nearly everything you need to know from the classes and lectures; it isn't necessary to do much further reading.</p> <p>17. In this department you're expected to spend a lot of time studying on your own.</p> <p>25. Lectures in this department are</p>	<p>This section was left out.</p>

	<p>basically a guide to reading.</p> <p>33. Lectures seem to be more important than tutorials or discussion groups in this departments.</p>	
IX. Vocational Relevance	<p>6. The courses in this department are geared to students' future employment.</p> <p>16. Lecturers in this department are keen to point out that they are giving us a professional training.</p> <p>24. The courses here seem to be pretty well determined by vocational requirements.</p> <p>32. The work I do here will definitely improve my future employment prospects.</p> <p>39. There seems to be considerable emphasis here on inculcating the 'right' professional attitudes.</p>	<p>This section was left out.</p>

## 1. Rewording inappropriate or inconsistent words and adding relevant words

As can be seen from Fig. A9.1 (refer to the underlined words), the term 'lecturers' was changed to 'teachers' which was more appropriate in the context of the learners of this study as most of them were taught by ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. In the CPQ, Personal Pronouns Type 1 as well as Personal Pronouns Types 2 and 3 such as 'you', 'your' students', 'they', and 'their' were used to refer to learners. To avoid unnecessary confusion, the use of the Personal Pronouns Type 1 such as 'I', 'we', 'us', 'our' and 'me' were maintained wherever appropriate when

referring to the learners throughout the questionnaire. Finally, 'materials' were added wherever applicable to make the questionnaire more applicable to Distance Learners.

## **2. Deleting repetitive/unsuitable items**

In Scale I, item 20 was left out as I felt it was asking for the same information as item 12 except that it was phrased in a negative manner.

In Scale II, item 30 was left out as I felt that this was a repetitive item. Items 6 and 22 had sufficiently covered the scope of this item.

In Scale III, item 3 was left out as I felt it was too strongly-worded. Besides, the gist of its content had been covered by other items.

In Scale IV, item 10 was left out. This was an irrelevant item since the intention of the NCPQ was to obtain students' responses with regard to the learning of English and not their learning of an academic subject.

In Scale V, item 31 was left out as I felt it was not very different from item 23. Besides, item 23 is more appropriate to a student-teacher relationship.



### 3. Removing and adding of scales

The scales 'Formal Teaching Methods' and 'Social Climate' were left out because Distance Learners' responses to the items in these two groups could be easily predicted and hence the results would be a foregone conclusion. 'Vocational relevance' was also excluded since the learning of English has no direct vocational relevance. The scale Teaching/Learning Components was added. It was designed to elicit more information regarding students' perceptions of the teaching and learning components provided by the English Language Proficiency Department.

# Appendix 10A

## Interview Guide

### *Introduction*

*I am indeed glad that you are able to attend interview. I would like to thank you for being here today. As you know, the reason why I invited here is to give you a chance to voice your opinions on the English proficiency courses we are offering through the distance learning mode and to share your experience with me. Your feedback will be most beneficial and will go a long way to helping us improve our programmes. Please rest assured that everything you say here is in confidence.*

*You can answer in English or Bahasa Malaysia. Feel free anytime during the discussion to shift from one language to the other.*

### **I. Opening Questions**

1. Can you please tell me which department you are in?
2. What courses are you taking this semester?

### **II. Introductory Questions**

1. I would like to find out from you why you have decided to study through the distance learning mode?
2. How would you describe your experience on the whole?

### **III Transition questions**

1. What do you think of the English Proficiency programme on the whole?
2. What do you like best about the programme?
3. a. Is there anything you dislike about the programme?  
b. (If yes) Can you tell me what they are?

## **IV Key questions**

***Now, I'd like you to reflect on specific aspects of the programme.  
(a short pause)***

***1. Let's start by considering the administration/running of the course.....***

***Are you satisfied with the way the programme is run?***

***(Follow-up questions --- only if necessary)***

- (If yes) What would you consider to be the positive aspects of this programme?***
- (If no) What types of administrative problems do you face?***
- How do you think the administrative problems can be solved?***

***2. Let's consider the support system given to you. This includes tutorials, comments on teacher-marked assignments, course and study guides, audio and visual aids and others.***

***Do you feel that sufficient support has been given to you?***

***(Follow-up question --- only if necessary)***

- Why do you say so?***
- (For those who say that greater support should be given) What types of extra support would you like to have? How often do you want them?***
- What do you feel about the quality of the support system given? How do you think this can be improved?***

***3. Let's now go on to your individual needs .....***

***Do you feel the programme has managed to meet your individual needs?***

***(Follow-up questions --- only if necessary)***

- (If yes) how has the programme managed to meet your needs?***
- (If no) How has it failed to meet your needs? How do you think it should be changed to meet your needs?***



- 4. If you have any other issues that have not been discussed, now is the time to bring it up. I'll give you a few minutes to think over it.....**

(Follow-up questions --- only if necessary)

- *In your opinion, how can these issues can be resolved?*

## **V Ending questions**

- 1. Of all the issues we have discussed, which would you consider to be the most in need of attention?**

(Follow-up questions --- only if necessary)

- *What do you think should be done in the immediate future?*

## Appendix 10B

### Sample lesson from the Study Guide for VG 2113 (English for Social Science)

VG 2113 is designed for High Proficiency learners and is based on the text 'Global Views' by Sokolik (1993).

#### UNIT V

#### **CHANGING POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

Welcome to Unit V. The theme of this unit is Changing Political Systems. You're going to read three passages and a poem.

Prior to reading, you'll get to do activities that will provide you with the background knowledge to understand the materials better. The activities include:

- guessing contents by looking at titles
- listening to a national news programme
- studying a cartoon
- picturing scenes in your mind
- referring to a map and a flag

After reading, you'll get to undertake activities that will enable you to understand the materials better and improve your command of vocabulary and language skills. The activities include:

- recalling key ideas and details
- understanding, rephrasing and explaining unfamiliar structures in line with the author's intention
- guessing the meanings of slang, colloquial and unfamiliar words from context
- choosing suitable themes for a poem and explaining your choice

## LESSON 1

Turn to SB p. 2.

### PLANNING & GOALS

Do the ranking task in your SB.



There are no fixed answers to this task. Identifying your goals will help you to determine what is important to you. Check to see whether you've achieved your goals at the end of the Unit.

SB p.2

### LOOKING AHEAD

#### OBJECTIVES

**This activity will activate your knowledge about the materials in this chapter.**

Turn to SB p.3.

Do numbers 1-5 orally.



Can you guess the contents of this unit? If you can't, don't worry, you'll learn more about the World's Changing Political Systems in this unit.



SB p.3

## LISTENING

### OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this section, you should be better able to:**

1. listen for new ideas.
2. make notes.
3. share your ideas with someone.
4. write down description of news items.



Watch a national television news programme on TV2,  
TV3 or Mega TV instead

Turn to SB p.4.

Do exercises A 1-5. Write your answers in your SB.



SB p.4

Instead of doing B 1-3, do the following activity.



- ◆ Contact by phone the coursemate assigned to you.
- ◆ Narrate to her/him your answers for questions 3 and 5. Try to include as many details as possible. You've to listen to your friend's narration too. Jot down notes as you listen to her/him.
- ◆ Write a report of the news stories as told by your course mate. Include your personal reactions towards the news items.
- ◆ Share your report with your coursemates at your tutorial.



Turn to SB p. 5.

## **ANALYSIS**

### OBJECTIVE

**This activity will provide you with the background knowledge to comprehend the reading passage better.**

Do numbers 1 and 2 in your Exercise book.



Check your answers with the sample answers on the next page.

Sample Answers for Analysis p.5

1. In the "before" picture, the U.S.S.R. is unified while the rest of Europe is divided into many different countries. In the "after" picture, Europe is unified, while the U.S.S.R. is shown split into several countries.
2. The cartoon is portraying the separation of the Soviet Union into different nations and the unification of Europe with the introduction of the European Economic Community, a single European passport, and a common currency.



If your answers are similar to ours, well done. You've sufficient background knowledge to understand the reading passage. Go on to the next section.

But if you can't answer the questions, don't worry. Do read up a little more on the collapse of the totalitarian regimes in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe.



SB p. 5

## **THE STATE OF EUROPE, CHRISTMAS EVE, 1989**

### **OBJECTIVE**

**When you've completed this section, you should be better able to recall key ideas and details.**



**Read the passage.**

SB p.6

### **COMPREHENSION**

**Do numbers 1-3 in your SB.**



**Check your answers with ours on the next page.**

Answers for Comprehension p.6

1. d (This is an important detail in the passage. The event is especially significant because he is so old.)
2. b (This is the key idea in the passage.)
3. c (If you manage to get a general understanding of the passage, you'll realize that the writer is excited about the change.)



If you've got all the answers correct, good work . You're now ready to proceed to more challenging tasks.

## ANALYSIS

### OBJECTIVE

**When you've completed this section, you should be better able to:**

1. understand unfamiliar constructions.
2. rephrase complex sentences into simpler sentences.



To understand an unfamiliar construction, first you must know the meaning of key words and phrases. The key words and phrases are:

contemporaries	----	people of the same generation
larger impersonal history	----	a historic event that does not have direct effect on their personal lives
unfolded before their eyes	----	happening during their lifetime
strike each separately as being his or hers intensely felt personal experience	----	affect each person emotionally

**Now you can try to rephrase the sentence into a simpler sentence.**





Here are some acceptable answers:

Although the younger generation were not personally involved in a historic event, the event might affect each of them emotionally.

OR

An impersonal historic event that happened during the younger generation's lifetime might affect each of them emotionally.

OR

A historic event happening during the younger generation's lifetime might be impersonal to them but the event might hit/touch/affect each of them personally.



Your answers need not be the same as these. They're acceptable as long as the gist is the same



SB p.6

Now, do questions a - e in your SB. Since you are not working in a group, do the exercise on your own. Share your answers with the coursemate assigned to you.



Turn to SB p. 7.

Do questions a and b in your SB.



Check your answers with the sample answers on the next page.

Sample Answers for Analysis p.7

- a. The current events in the Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria make me feel like I am seeing something I had hoped would happen, but didn't expect it would happen so soon.

OR

The events that have happened in Soviet Union and Bulgaria make me feel like I am witnessing a miracle.

OR

The events that have happened in Soviet Union and Bulgaria appear to me like the act of God.

- b. I gave up hope of seeing the collapse of the totalitarian governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in my lifetime.

OR

The fall of the totalitarian governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is something I had never thought I would get to see in my life time.

OR

The writer never expected to be able to see the fall of the totalitarian governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in his lifetime.



Don't worry if your answers are different. As long as the gist is the same you're on the right track.



## Appendix 10C

**Guidelines on the number of weeks to spend on each unit as indicated in the course outline**

Scheme of work for students taking VG 2113 (English for Social Science)

Week	Unit	Lessons
1	1 : Eco-politics	1 & 2
2	1 : Eco-politics	3 & 4
3	2 : Language	1 & 2
4	2 : Language	3 & 4
5	3 : War	1 & 2
6	3 : War	3 & 4
7	4 : Travel	1 & 2
8	4 : Travel	3 & 4
9	Preparation for: Reading Recall Test Listening Test Oral Presentation	
10	5 : Changing Political Systems	1 & 2
11	5 : Changing Political Systems	3 & 4
12	6 : International Media	1 & 2
13	6 : International Media	3 & 4
14	Preparation for the Final Exam	

## Schedule for tutorials for tutors and students for the VG 2113

### TUTORIAL ONE (3 hours) 9 - 12 am .

Time Allocated	Activities	Things to do before tutorials	
		by students	by tutor
½ hour	General Discussion of Course	Read Course Booklet	Read Course Booklet
1 hour	Discussion of student's assignments for Units 1 - 3.	Bring to class your assignments for units 1 - 3. Discuss problematic assignments with your tutor.	Prepare units 1 - 3 (refer to the Study Guide).
1 ½ hours	Practice of Role-Plays from : Unit 1 : Ecopolitics SB p. 103 Unit 2 : Language SB p. 193 Unit 3 : War SB p. 85	Practise the role-plays in Units 1 - 3.	Prepare role-plays found in Unit 1 - 3. (Divide students into groups of 3 - 4 and assign different role-plays for different groups).

### (3 hours) 2 - 5 pm .

1 ½ hours	Writing Task 1 - A Reaction Paper	Practise writing a reaction paper	Prepare suitable materials for the reaction paper.
1 ½ hours	Practice of Oral Presentation	Prepare a suitable topic for the oral presentation. Your presentation should be between 5 to 10 mins.	Familiarise yourself with the Oral Assessment scale.

## TUTORIAL TWO (3 hours) 9-12am

Time Allocated	Activities	Things to do before tutorials	
		by students	by tutor
30 mins 30 mins	Reading Recall Test Listening Test	Prepare for the Reading Recall Test and the Listening Test	Collect Test papers and the video tape from the PJJ coordinator.
1 hour	Discussion of students' assignments for Units 4 - 6.	Bring to class your assignments for units 4 - 6. Discuss problematic assignments with your tutor.	Prepare Units 4 - 6 (refer to the Study Guide).
1 hour	Practise of Role-Plays from : Unit 4 : Travel SB p. 121 Unit 5 : Changing Political Systems SB p. 19 Unit 6 : International Media SB p. 153	Practise the role-plays in Units 4 - 6.	Prepare role plays found in Unit 4 - 6 (Divide students into groups of 3 - 4 and assign different role-plays for different groups).

(3 hours) 2-5pm.

2 hours	Oral Presentation	Prepare a suitable topic for the oral presentation. Your presentation should be between 10 - 15 mins	-
1 hour	Discussion of Final Exam	Practise the Final Exam paper (given in the Course Booklet)	Prepare the Final Exam paper (given in the Course Booklet)



## Appendix 10D

### Dickson and Carver's three kinds of preparations for independent study (1980)

#### 1. *Methodological preparation*

Methodological preparation includes learning aspects of the metalanguage of both language description and language teaching, and learning techniques of language learning. The first four aspects listed below are concerned with learning aspects of the metalanguage.

- 1.1 The pupils must become aware of the units of language description. These include the terminology used in grammars and dictionaries.
- 1.2 The pupils must become aware of the learning units—which may not be the same as 1.1 above. Thus, depending on the approach being used, they need to know what '*structures*' are, what *functions* and *notions* are, and so on.
- 1.3 The pupils must become aware of the objectives of their language course. To understand these, they probably need to know 1.1 and 1.2 above.
- 1.4 Closely related to 1.3 above they need to have a synoptic view of the course in order to take an active part in planning.

The following aspects are more directly concerned with preparation for how to continue learning.

- 1.5 The pupils need to be given extended practice in organising their own work. They need to be given opportunities to make decisions relating to their own work. Thus:
- 1.6 They need practice in making decisions about how to use materials; e.g. when doing an exercise for which the answers are available they make the decision of how to use the answers; some pupils might *begin* by looking at the answers, others might not refer to them until the end.
- 1.7 They need practice in making decisions about *what* material to use. Thus, while there might be a common course for the whole class, there could be variation in the supplementary materials used by individuals. Thus there could be a wide choice for extensive reading and listening; or pupils could be encouraged to select materials which were appropriate to remedy areas of difficulty.
- 1.8 They need practice in correcting their own work, both written and spoken, either from answers provided or from other sources.

- 1.9 They need practice in keeping a record of their own progress through the syllabus, and maybe how well they were doing.
- 1.10 they need practice in working co-operatively with other learners. Autonomous learning does not imply learning in isolation, and many aspects of language practice are best done with others.

## 2. Psychological preparation

- 2.1 The development of self-confidence. This is one of the most important aspects of psychological preparation, and we must seek to find techniques which will achieve this. We see this as one of the most important skills of any teacher, not merely of the language teacher.
- 2.2 The development of 'process orientation'. By this we mean the development of an attitude in which education is viewed as a formal process for acquiring learning rather than as a game in which the players score points by getting the right answers (i.e. 'product orientation').
- 2.3 The development of self-motivation. 2.2 above is one important aspect of this.
- 2.4 Development in the pupil of awareness about his own learning. This can be fostered by giving opportunities for discussion of how different pupils go about particular learning tasks, of what learning difficulties different pupils have, and of how they might overcome them. This relates closely to 2.5 and 2.6 below.
- 2.5 Development in the pupils of awareness of their own learning problems, and of
- 2.6 their own progress.  
(2.4, 2.5, 2.6 can be viewed as the psychological correlates of 1.8 and 1.9 above).

## 3. Practice in Self-Direction

Opportunities for this pervade the whole language-learning/teaching process, and it is essentially a matter of the teacher seeking opportunities to relinquish some degree of control to the pupils for the duration of particular activities. There are two aspects of it which are listed below, however, since these mesh neatly with the *techniques* we are going to discuss.

- 3.1 Giving pupils opportunities for making decisions about (a) when they perform certain learning tasks and (b) where they perform them. At a later stage it might be appropriate for pupils to make decisions about (c) whether they perform certain learning tasks.
- 3.2 Giving pupils opportunities to gain periods of independence from the teacher—as in some forms of group work, for example, or project work.

## Appendix 10E

### Motives why distance learners participate in distance education programmes

1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Barriers to on-campus study</b></li> <li>• <b>Situational barriers</b> such as commitments related to job, family, geographical distance and financial issues (Holmberg, 1995; Hiola, 1988)</li> <li>• <b>Institutional barriers</b> such as inadequate learner support, entry procedures, inflexibility in terms of entry requirements, learning environment, and course times (Rubenson, 1986; Race, 1989).</li> <li>• <b>'Psychosocial barriers'</b> such as lack of confidence, bad experience studying in a conventional classroom setting (Thorpe, 1987).</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Attractions of distance education programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flexibility of distance education</b> such as providing a mean of teaching people wherever they are (Jenkins, 1981); easily adaptable to individual needs, easy to combine mode with other methods (Coggin, 1986; Coath, 1987); advantages in terms of pace and time of studies (Flinck, 1987); learning opportunities for women denied education either for cultural or financial reasons (Hiola and Moss, 1990)</li> <li>• <b>Cost effectiveness</b> (Hiola, 1988)</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b>Other motives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seeking knowledge</b> (Putra, 1993)</li> <li>• <b>upgrading of working skills or qualifications/seeking improvement of occupational performance or prospects</b> (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982)</li> <li>• <b>Seeking specific occupation/ better jobs</b> (Roberts et al, 1991)</li> <li>• <b>'Second chance' opportunity</b> (Ljosa, 1992)</li> <li>• <b>Personal satisfaction</b> (Roberts et al, 1991)</li> </ul>

(Mohammad, 1999: 91; and cited sources)



## Appendix 11A

### Sample materials for preparation of teachers (Dickinson, 1987:158-163)

#### Psychological preparation

##### *What is self-instruction?*

This is an activity designed to help people to find out about self-instruction.

##### *Objectives*

- To discover what is meant by self-instruction;
- To consider what type and degree of self-instruction would be appropriate for a described set of learners in some particular situation.

##### *Resources*

- Chapters 1, 3 and 7 of this book.
- Gross (1979) Chapter 2, pp. 23–48.
- Tough (1979) Chapter 3, pp. 16–32.

##### *Tasks*

- Participants are asked to produce a definition or a brief description of self-instruction. They are asked to read the references beforehand, though it is useful if these can also be available during the activities session. Individuals attempt to formulate a definition or description and then agree on a common formulation with another person. It may be possible to sustain this to group level – two or three pairs agreeing a definition or description.

The main value of this activity is the discussion that goes on while attempting to come to an agreement.

- Using a similar procedure, participants are asked to produce an agreed list of points for and against self-instruction. The various reports can be discussed at a plenary session.
- Participants are asked to make specific proposals (though in outline) for elements of self-instruction suitable for a specified set of learners following a particular course.
- In addition to these activities, some of those suggested for the psychological preparation of learners could also be used with teachers.

### *The characteristics of the ideal helper*

This is concerned with changes of role expected of teachers operating in a self-instructional mode.

#### *Objectives*

- To enable participants to reflect on the changing role of the teacher in a self-instructional mode;
- To consider in detail what the role of the helper is;
- To list the personal characteristics necessary to fulfil this role.

#### *Resources*

- The list of the characteristics of the ideal helper in Chapter 7 of this book.
- Tough (1979) pp. 177-84.
- Rogers (1969)-Chapter 7, pp. 164-6.
- Rogers (1969) Chapter 4.

#### *Task*

Draw up a list of the characteristics and skills of the ideal helper for the learning situation *in your institution*.

### *Self-assessment*

The following activities are all directly concerned with various changes of role that teachers need to adjust to in a self-instructional mode. Many, of course, will find these role changes easy, indeed they may already relate to learners in ways facilitative of self-instruction. Others may find it difficult to change their attitudes to learners and to learning activities. Preparation for learners' self-assessment is concerned first with possible attitudes of teachers towards self-assessment, and then with aspects of the teacher's role in preparing learners for self-assessment. Attitudes to assessment are crucially important to self-instruction. The success of a learner-centred approach to self-instruction is dependent upon the learner being willing and able to take on responsibility for his own learning; and this is often dependent upon the teacher being willing to share this responsibility. The teacher's willingness to

relinquish sole responsibility for grading and assessment could be a big issue in the success of a self-instructional programme.

#### *Objectives*

- To enable participants to reflect upon their attitudes to assessment, with particular reference to the respective roles of teacher and learner;
- To consider the feasibility of self-assessment;
- To consider the desirability of emphasising formative assessment at the expense of summative assessment.

#### *Resources*

- Heron (1981) especially pp. 57-61.
- Pirsig (1974) Chapter 16, especially pp. 190-6.
- Tough (1979) pp. 158-63.
- Rogers (1969) Chapter 6, pp. 151-5.
- Chapter 8 of this book.

### *Tasks*

- Participants are asked to respond to Carl Rogers' conclusions about grades and examinations:
  - ... by themselves these interpretations of my experience may sound queer and aberrant, but not particularly shocking. It is when I realize the implications that I shudder a bit at the distance I have come from the commonsense world that everyone knows is right ...
  - Such experience would imply that we would do away with teaching. People would get together if they wished to learn.
  - We would do away with examinations. They measure only the inconsequential type of learning.
  - We would do away with grades and credits for the same reason.
  - We would do away with degrees as a measure of competence partly for the same reason. Another reason is that a degree marks an end or a conclusion of something, and a learner is only interested in the continuing process of learning.
  - We would do away with the exposition of conclusions, for we would realize that no one learns significantly from conclusions.
- Participants are asked to consider the two questions posed in Chapter 8 of this book:
  - Can learners make reasonably accurate self-assessments?
  - Will learners make reasonably accurate self-assessments?

### *Helping learners in self-assessment*

The second aspect of self-assessment concerns the kinds of things teachers may be involved in when they are helping learners.

### *Resources*

- Chapter 8 of this book.
- Oskarsson (1984).
- Windeatt (1981).

### *Tasks*

- Specify a number of language learning goals – for example, developing fluency in spontaneous spoken language – and devise ways that learners can self-assess their achievement.
- Consider critically one of the examples of self-assessment tests in Chapter 8 and Appendix D(I) of this book. Make suggestions for modification.

## **Methodological preparation**

The workshops suggested here are all concerned with examples of tasks which teachers may be asked to undertake when they are helping in a self-instructional mode.

### *Needs analysis*

### *Resources*

- Chapter 5 of this book.
- Allwright (1982) pp. 24–31.
- Munby (1978) Chapter 10.



### *Tasks*

- Examine a needs analysis questionnaire and modify it to suit your situation.
- Design a needs analysis questionnaire to be used by learners.
- Design an interview schedule to be used by a tutor to elicit learners' needs.

### *Materials evaluation, adaptation and preparation*

#### *Resources*

- Chapter 4 of this book.
- Geddes and Sturtridge (1982).
- Cross (1980).
- Logan (1980).
- Windeatt (1981).

#### *Tasks*

- Construct a text book evaluation schedule from the criteria in Chapter 4, and apply it to a course book.
- Apply the text book evaluation schedule to a course book, identify needs for adaption to make the book more suitable for self-instruction, and adapt it.
- Produce a unit of self-instructional materials for a specified group of learners. Carefully record the problems met in preparing the materials and the proposed solutions.

### *Setting up a self-access resource*

#### *Resources*

- Chapter 6 of this book.
- Riley and Zoppi's (1976).
- Geddes and Sturtridge (1982).
- Harding-Esch (1982).

#### *Tasks*

- Produce a specification of the components of a self-access resource in the ideal system.
- Propose a plan for the development of a self-access resource over a period of, say, four years.

## *The training of learners for self-instruction*

### *Resources*

- Stanchina and Riley (1978).

### *Tasks*

- Take a course book and consider what training learners would need to use it in a self-instructional mode.
- What particular learning activities could you suggest to autonomous groups?
- What uses can learners make of their own authentic documents? What training would they need?

## *Specific training for language learning*

### *Resources*

- Chapter 7 of this book.
- Cohen and Aphek (1981).
- Rubin (1981).
- Wesche (1979).

### *Tasks*

- Participants, individually and then in pairs, recall their own language learning experience and confirm and add to the list of learning strategies in Chapter 7.
- Sort the strategies into those that can be usefully taught and those that cannot.
- Consider how to train learners in these strategies. Each group takes one strategy and proposes a way of training learners in it.
- Consider how these strategies could be introduced into the language learning programme.

## **Conducting workshops**

Gibbs (1981:93) suggests a way of organising workshops – he calls them Structured Group Exercises – which involves participants first thinking through a problem individually, then working in pairs, sharing with one other person the results of their thinking; then two or three pairs join together to form small groups within which the decisions reached by each pair are formulated into a group response to the topic. Finally, there is a plenary session, chaired by the tutor, at which each group reports its results. This structure is a very effective way of involving everyone in a group in a discussion, since it gives everyone the opportunity to express their opinions, anxieties and so on under the least threatening conditions. It also emphasises co-operative learning.

## Appendix 11B

### Roles of a language advisor/counsellor

The language advisor/counsellor of UKM resource centres will have two main roles:

1. helping learners develop their learning competence through separate counselling sessions. During these sessions, the counsellor have at least three functions. On the basis of what learners say, they may choose to provide:
  - (a) conceptual information which help learners to develop their representations, metalinguistic and metacognitive notions;
  - (b) methodological information on topics such as materials and work techniques, and planning programmes of work;
  - (c) psychological support, acting mostly as a "benevolent outsider" who can help learners come to terms with their successes and failures;
  - (d) a more recent development – 'learning to learn' sessions in which no reference is made to a specific foreign language.

(Gremmo and Riley, 1995)

2. creating the material conditions favourable to language learning, which in practice often means designing, establishing and running resource centres. See Little (1989), Holec (1994), Riley (1986), Dickinson (1987), and Esch (1994) for research into how to establish parameters for the selection and organisation of materials to be made available to learners, It is also the responsibility of the language advisor/counsellor to help learners to learn how to use the available resource materials and the education technology available for information on .



## Appendix 11C

### Preparation of a resource centre

The resource centre that I propose must have the following:

1. **Access to materials.** This means facilities for such things as perusing, selecting, listening, viewing, sampling, getting copies of print or audio to take away (and these facilities available in minutes rather than hours).
2. **Access to activities.** The learner needs people to talk to, to listen to, to discuss, argue and exchange information with, to write to, to practice with, to learn from. Thus, the resource centre should organise discussion groups or group activities.
3. **Access to helpers.** The learners should be able to access the language counsellor or other helpers by telephone, by note, or by answer-phone to arrange for appointments.

The resource centre must be 'user friendly'. It must allow the learners to do the following things:

1. to access the building for long hours.
2. to access to the staff easily.
3. to access materials easily.
4. to have a suitable work place to look at print and video, listen to and sample tapes, meet in small groups.
5. to obtain copies of print materials and tapes quickly.
6. to store materials and reproduce materials effectively.

The resource centres must provide the following facilities:

1. audio cassette machines with headsets.
2. video playback machines and suitable place to view the videos.
3. computers with access to internet, and other CALL packages.
4. sound-proof room for learners to practice pronunciation.

It must have a user-friendly classification and indexing system. Finally, learners should be helped to learn how to use the self-resource centre, and be encouraged to give feedback on how to improve the facilities available.

(Information derived from Dickinson, 1987:108-120, and from visits to the self-resource centres in Leeds Metropolitan University and Southampton University.)

## Appendix 11D

### Sample materials for preparation of learners (Dickinson, 1987:164-170)

#### Psychological preparation

The following suggestions are concerned with demonstrating to learners what self-instruction is, and that it is a viable learning mode.

##### *Describing self-instruction*

###### *Resources*

- Chapters 1 and 8 of this book.

###### *Activity*

This might begin with a general description of the possibilities – using a device similar to Figure 2 in Chapter 1 – and then give several examples similar to those in Chapter 1. This could be extended into describing self-assessment, using a similar approach – a description of the possibilities, and several relevant examples.

##### *For and against*

###### *Objectives*

- To express anxieties about, and aspirations for a self-instructional learning mode;
- To consider one's own and others' anxieties and aspirations carefully.

###### *Resources*

- Gross (1979) pp. 17 and 18.
- Rogers (1969) Chapter 6, pp. 152–5.

###### *Activity*

Following the tutor's introduction to self-instruction, individuals list points in favour of and against self-instruction. Pairs combine their lists and then groups attempt to agree on, say, three major points for self-instruction and three against. The following plenary session is concerned first with establishing a total list of points and, secondly, and most importantly, with discussing them.

##### *Learning project I*

###### *Objective*

- To show that self-instruction is a viable learning mode.



### *Resources*

- Tough (1979) Chapter 3, pp. 16-32, in particular the quantitative findings of his research.
- Gross (1979) Chapter 2, pp. 23-48, in particular the examples he gives of learners and their projects.
- Chapters 1 and 8 of this book.

### *Activity*

The tutor reviews Tough's quantitative data on adult learning projects, and gives examples from Gross, and this book. Participants individually note two or three learning projects they have undertaken over the past year and also note any particular difficulties or satisfaction they found with them. Pairs put two lists together and consider the difficulties to see if they can find a solution. Groups operate likewise.

### *Learning project II*

#### *Objective*

- To demonstrate that self-instruction is a viable language learning mode.

#### *Resources*

- Whatever is relevant to the tasks selected.

#### *Activity*

Participants are helped to select a relevant limited language learning objective. This is easier if this activity follows needs analysis for those learners to whom it is relevant. However, the objective should be achievable within an hour or two of learning time. Examples of this might include discovering a satisfactory explanation for some grammatical point, or discovering the expressions of some communicative function in the target language, such as appropriate ways of expressing thanks to the hostess after a dinner party or polite expressions to use when asking where the lavatory is.

Participants begin working on their objective(s) during a class session where they can be helped to plan the work, decide what resources, material or human, would be useful in helping to achieve it, discover how to obtain these resources, and decide how to assess whether, and to what degree, they have achieved their objective(s).

In some circumstances it will be necessary for participants to work on these objectives in their own time, outside of a classroom session; in others it will be possible for participants to work on them in class where the teacher is available to give assistance. Anyway, participants work on

their chosen objectives and try to achieve them. They are asked to note any particularly successful techniques they use, and whatever difficulties they encounter.

Finally students, working in pairs and then in groups, make a simple collation of successful techniques and particular difficulties, after which they seek solutions for the difficulties. The plenary session following should focus on the solutions of problems, and these solutions can be added to the list of techniques.

### **Methodological preparation**

Methodological preparation is concerned with preparing learners to undertake the actual tasks of language learning in a self-instructional mode. The majority of suggestions which follow are concerned with the use of authentic texts.

#### *Choosing authentic documents to study*

Learners need guidance on selecting listening and reading texts as well as preparation in how to use them. When the document is a written text it may be necessary simply to have regard to topic and length, and maybe to an estimate of linguistic complexity measured perhaps by sentence length or some more precise index of readability. The selection of a recording of spoken language would consider many more criteria. This list from Riley (1981) might function both as a useful guide to the cataloguing of a listening resource, and as a check-list to be suggested to learners to take into account when selecting a text.

- *Topic.* What is the recording about?
- *Setting.* What is the physical context of the recording (for example a conference, a radio talk, etc.)?
- *Number of speakers.* Is it a monologue (only one speaker), a dialogue (two speakers), or are there more than two speakers?
- *Clarity.* What is the level of background noise, traffic noise, other speakers, etc., which might make the recording more difficult to understand?
- *Spontaneous or prepared.* Is the text read from a prepared script either as a monologue or acted in a dialogue, or is it spontaneous?
- *Formal or informal.* What is the degree of formality/informality of the language?
- *Accents.* Do all the speakers use a standard accent familiar to the listener or do some use regional accents likely to be unfamiliar?
- *Speed of delivery.* How fast is the delivery? A BBC newsreader running short of time can read the news at a surprisingly fast rate.



- *Length*. How long is the recording?
- *Date of production*. How current is the information?
- *Supporting materials*. Is there a transcription available? Are there any other supporting materials?

### *Study techniques*

The following suggestions to learners for study techniques are taken largely from three sources, Moulden (1982), Riley (1981) and Dickinson (1980). These suggestions do not take account of the learners' levels. Some may be appropriate only for intermediate to advanced learners.

### *Work on written texts*

The majority of the suggestions here come from Moulden (1982:25).

- *Reading speed*. Time yourself while reading a text. Global comprehension can be checked by reading the text again carefully. Reading-speed tables can be found in several places – for example, de Leeuw (1965).
- *Search reading*. Use the title, illustrations and perhaps the introduction to generate questions on the content of the text. Try to answer the questions quickly by reading the text. Be prepared to revise the questions as you read. Check the answers by reading the text more carefully. Get another learner to read the text, and discuss your questions and answers with the other person. Finally, if all else fails to solve a problem, ask a teacher/counsellor or find someone with a competent knowledge of the language.
- *Reading comprehension*. Work with another learner. Each take a different text or a different part of the same text. Read it carefully and prepare questions for the other person. Exchange texts and answer the other person's questions. Discuss the answers you have each given to the other person's questions. Use texts for which there is a translation to check on global and detailed comprehension.

Many of these ideas can be put together in ways such as those suggested in the 'Standard Reading Exercise' suggested by Scott *et al.* (1984). They suggest that tutors construct a standard exercise which can be used on any text. The questions are written in the learners' mother tongue. The form of the standard exercise which they use is reproduced in Appendix C(II).

Texts as the basis for grammar, vocabulary and discourse exercises and problem solving. Work either with a partner or alone. If you work alone, you will have to allow a lapse of time between preparing the activity and actually doing it.



- *Cloze tests and exercises.* Select a text and make a photocopy. Prepare a cloze test either by blocking out every seventh word, or by blocking out selected word types – for example, verb forms, or prepositions or articles. Your partner (or you, after a time lapse) replaces the missing words. Check the answers on the original. If you are working on your own, cut a narrow strip of paper and place it across a reading text (you will probably need to fold it or you will see through it!). Read the text and attempt to replace the obscured words, part words and phrases. You can alter the level of difficulty by changing the width of the strip (Riley 1980).
- *Mechanical exercises.* Many of the exercise types used in (older) course books can be prepared almost automatically, though this sometimes results in very difficult activities. For example, one learner writes out the sentences of a paragraph at random, the other rearranges. Parts of sentences can be obliterated on a copy of a text by one learner, the other attempts to reconstruct them. Other examples include changing all the verbs in a set of sentences to another tense and making other necessary changes. Change the number to plural/singular and make the necessary changes. Change the gender of the subject; change from affirmative to negative, etc.

#### *Work on recorded texts*

- *Global comprehension.* Listen to the recording and try to get a general idea of what it is about. Check comprehension by listening more carefully, stopping and replaying sections and/or by using a transcription\* of the recording, and check it against the transcription supplied.
- *'Heighten' the transcription you have made.* That is, convert it into an acceptable written form of the language by removing all the false starts, hesitation phenomena, repetitions and so on, and put it into the normal sentence organisation of the written language.
- *Selective listening.* Construct questions from the title of the talk and from the introduction. Listen to the recording for the answers, revising the questions as you proceed. Check the answers by reading the transcript.
- *Work with another learner.* Each construct comprehension questions on a different recording (or a different part of the same one). Exchange questions, and answer them. Discuss questions and answers with your partner. Check answers against the transcript.
- *Summary writing.* Take notes from the recording as you listen. Write

\* Transcribe and transcription here refer to a version written out in standard orthography – not in phonetic symbols.

a summary from the notes. Check the summary either against the original recording or/and against a transcription.

A 'Standard Listening Exercise' can be constructed on the model of the Standard Reading Exercise. (See the example in Appendix C(III).)

#### *Practice in specific listening skills*

- *Memory (I)*. Stop the cassette and repeat the last few words. Rewind and check.
- *Memory (II)*. Stop the cassette and try to remember the last two or three points the speaker has made. Rewind and check.
- *Prediction*. As you listen, try to predict what the speaker will say. This can be either prediction of the actual words or prediction of the content.
- *Guessing strategies*. When listening to a new text for the first time, attempt to piece together the sense from the fragments you understand. Check by more careful listening and/or by using the transcription.
- *Pronunciation (I)*. Shadow the speaker in a recording, and if you are using a language laboratory compare your version with the original.
- *Pronunciation (II)*. Read from a transcript and compare your recording with the original. Clearly, learners will need help and preparation in devising these activities.

#### *Communicative activities*

Communicative activities concerned with the written language may be relatively easily initiated by the learner. The work Liz Pearson has undertaken in practising reading business letters and replying to them has already been described (see example 3 Chapter 1). Advanced language learners who are involved in scientific research in a medium other than their mother tongue frequently need to write papers or a dissertation and learn on the job, as it were, by getting someone to read and criticise what they have written.

In addition, post-intermediate learners can benefit from an activity described by Cohen (1983), which he calls 'reformulation'. After writing two or more drafts of the essay, and getting feedback from peers and teachers on the writing, the writer gets a native speaker of the target language (or failing a native speaker, a competent non-native) to reformulate part or all of the essay in his own words making it read in a 'native-like' way. There are no constraints put on the reformulator; he uses whatever vocabulary and style he thinks is appropriate. The learner then compares the two versions, either with the reformulator or alone. Cohen recommends that the comparison is made along the following lines:



- *Lexis*. Vocabulary is compared word for word.
- *Syntax*. The text is examined for word order and the choice and ordering of clauses.
- *Cohesion*. The text is examined for differences in pronominal reference, use of conjunctions and lexical substitution.
- *Discourse functions*. The marking of discourse functions are compared.
- *Paragraphs*. Physical and conceptual paragraphs are compared.

The specific problems *vis-à-vis* the target language of learners with particular mother tongues can be emphasised in the comparison.

Some learners with highly specialist requirements in communication in the spoken language may also initiate simulated activities. Stanchina and Riley (1978) describe the case of Dr A, a French cardiologist who wished to attend a conference held in English where he would give a slide lecture and act as chairman of one of the round table discussions. As part of his language preparation for these events, he worked with a helper in simulations of these activities.

In general, however, it would be unrealistic to expect learners to design their own spoken language communication activities, though it may be reasonable to expect them to *manage* such activities themselves after a period of preparation. In order to facilitate this it is necessary to have a large selection of activities available, with simple and clear descriptions of what is to be done. Ideas for activities can be taken from course books and articles (see, for example, Hendrickson 1980, 1983). Games and role-play activities can also be used, providing the instructions of what to do and how to do it are simple and clear (maybe in the learner's mother tongue if this is feasible). Alternative arrangements which preserve the learners' freedom of choice include 'activity options' (Roberts 1975, Geddes and McAlpin 1978) and 'sign-up' options. In activity options a regular time-span is allocated each week from the course timetable, during which learners can choose among several activities. The activities described by Geddes and McAlpin include Games, Listening, Research and Films; they are set up in separate areas and learners can circulate from one to the other. The system of 'sign-up' options has been in use in SCEO for some years. Learners sign up for role-play or simulation activities which are organised by a tutor.

